

Stereo Review

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HOME RECORDING

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TERRIFIC TAPES**

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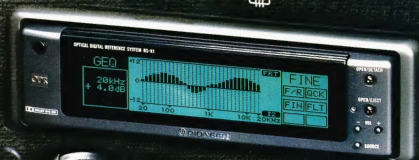
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EQUIPMENT

Cover

The first step to good homemade tapes is investing in a good recorder, such as the Teac W-6000R cassette deck shown here atop Onkyo's A-SV810PRO integrated amplifier. See page 81 for our Home Recording Buying Guide, page 60 for taping tips, page 77 for a look at integrated amps.

Photograph by Dan Wagner

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Let's get one thing straight—despite his reputation as a gloom-monger, Thompson doesn't write depressing songs • by Brett Milano



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Kate Bush stretches out in "The Red Shoes," Kevin Montgomery makes some American music, Isaac Stern and Yefim Bronfman set a new standard for Brahms sonatas, and Elihu Inbal leads the Vienna Symphony in a stunning Shostakovich Third

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BULLETIN

BY WILLIAM LIVINGSTONE
AND BOB ANKOSKO

WINTER CES HIGHLIGHTS

Home theater, surround for music, audio-equipped multimedia computers and TV-based systems, and high-tech audio shared the spotlight at the 1994 Winter Consumer Electronics Show held recently in Las Vegas.

Home theater/surround sound: The response to demonstrations of Dolby Surround Digital, the discrete six-channel digital format and designated successor to the current Dolby Surround system, was overwhelmingly positive, leaving many to speculate about its role in the future of home audio and video. Unlike previous theatrical previews, the AC-3-based system was demonstrated using prototype consumer gear. . . . Among the hordes of new products was B&O's first home theater system, built around the \$2,000 AV 7000 surround-processor/amp. Atlantic Technology had a few tricks up its sleeve, too, including a center-channel speaker with timbre controls. . . . THX disciples welcomed a new product category—the THX receiver. Onkyo plans to offer a \$2,000 model in May and Technics a \$1,200 one this fall. . . . Sanyo demonstrated a prototype 40-

inch rear-projection TV that produces a 3-D effect without requiring viewers to wear special glasses. . . . Go Video demonstrated the GV-3090WS dual-well VCR, featuring an onboard Dolby Pro Logic decoder and an RF transmitter for broadcasting the surround signal to a pair of wireless speakers (included); the \$1,500 deck is due in stores by June.

New formats: Sony announced that \$0,000 MiniDisc machines were shipped to dealers in the U.S. last year and unleashed a barrage of new MD products, including the shirt-pocket-size MZ-E2 player (\$550) and MZ-R2 recorder (\$750), due in stores this spring. Sharp showed the MD-M11 handheld MD recorder (\$750), which is due in April. . . . Except for the \$599 RS-DC8 recorder and a DCC-based minisystem from Technics, the DCC camp was quiet.

Audio: Carver showed the first "load independent" stereo power amplifier, the 300-watt Lightstar. It's slated for retail delivery in May at a price of \$3,000. . . . Luxman unveiled two new product lines, the 300 Series and the high-end Ultimate Series, and announced that they will be distributed by Minneapolis-based Canton

Electronics. . . . Triad demonstrated a line of in-wall, servo-controlled powered subwoofers ranging in price from \$500 to \$1,500. . . . In-wall-speaker pioneer Sonance showed its first cabinet speaker, the Director 20, featuring a 5½-inch coaxial driver with a pivoting tweeter; the \$300 speaker goes to stores in April.

Multimedia: The presence at CES of IBM, Compaq, Microsoft, Intel, and scores of other computer hardware and software companies signaled the growth to come in this fledgling category. . . . On the TV-based side, Philips announced that 200,000 CD-I machines were sold worldwide last year. . . . 3DO demonstrated forty-three multimedia titles in its format and said it hoped to deliver one hundred by year's end. Panasonic's \$700 FZ-1 3DO Interactive Multiplayer is the only 3DO player currently available, but Sanyo and AT&T are expected to market 3DO machines later this year.

Autosound: McIntosh took its audiophile tradition to the streets by launching a full line of car speakers and electronics, including three amplifiers that employ its patented PowerGuard distortion-limiting circuitry. . . . Phoenix Gold showed a prototype car subwoofer encased in clear acrylic that uses a unique "rotating radiator."

Don't miss "Showstoppers" next issue for our editors'

verdict on the cream of the Winter CES crop.

AIDS AWARENESS USA

Mary-Chapin Carpenter, Mark Chesnutt, and Kathy Mattea are prime movers among the country-music stars engaged in a new AIDS-prevention campaign aimed primarily at audiences in the Southern states and in rural America, where AIDS is spreading fastest.

Randy Scruggs is the musical supervisor of "Red Hot + Country," an AIDS benefit album modeled on the pop album "Red Hot + Blue" (which won a Record of the Year Award from STEREO REVIEW in 1992). "Red Hot + Country" is due from Mercury this spring. In addition to Carpenter, Chesnutt, and Mattea, performers on the CD include Billy Ray Cyrus, Brooks and Dunn, Rodney Foster, Dolly Parton, and Marty Stuart.

HIGH PROFILES

In Britain's New Year's Honors, the singer Shirley ("Goldfinger") Bassey was made a Commander of the British Empire. . . . At the Image Awards of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Michael Jackson was dubbed Entertainer of the Year. . . . Mr. Blackwell's 1994 list of the world's worst-dressed women included the singer Diana Ross. She came in third, after the actresses Glenn Close and Julie Roberts.

ENDURING FAME

The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS) has accepted into its Hall of Fame the following recordings: *Crazy Blues* by Mamie Smith and Her Jazz Hounds (Okeh 1920); Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera* with Lotte Lenya (MGM 1954); Miles Davis's "Miles Ahead" (Columbia 1958); Tony Bennett's *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* (Columbia 1962); Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" (Columbia 1963), and the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations" Capitol (1966).

At the Academy's 36th annual Grammy Awards on March 1, a NARAS Lifetime Achievement Award will be presented posthumously to the classical pianist Artur Schnabel (1887-1982) for his many artistic contributions to the recording medium. The awards program, with Garry Shandling as host, will be telecast on CBS from Radio City Music Hall in New York City from 8 to 11 p.m. Eastern time.

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Dragon:		Terminator 2:	
The Bruce Lee Story	*1150705	Judgment Day	*0233205
Made in America	*1150606	The Sound Of Music	*0003905
Sleepless in Seattle	*1154905	The Abyss	*0081102
Silver	*1147508	Die Hard	*0367607
Benny & Joon	*1108307	Die Hard 2: Die Harder	*0041806
Home Alone	*0104208	Under Siege	*1077906
Home Alone 2:		Basic Instinct	*1033206
Lost in New York	1104900	National Lampoon's	
Scarlite (1983)	0216804	Animal House	0211508
Sneakers	*1071604	The Last Boy Scout	*0779106
The Godfather	0000802	Chinatown	*0202507
The Godfather Part III	0842302	Fried Green Tomatoes	1005404
The Wizard Of Oz	0001404	Jaws	0100508
The Bodyguard	*1105907	Bugs Bunny Classics	0297705
The Blues Brothers	0211706	North By Northwest	*0264205
My Cousin Vinny	1033109	Conan The Barbarian	*0220509
Luminoer Man	1014505	The Man Who	
Dune	0211102	Would Be King	*0085803
GoodFellas	*0056906	The Empire Of The Sun	*0033206
Back To The Future	*0021149	New Jack City	0071507
Back To The Future II	*0021304	Forever Young	*1104306
Back To The Future III	*0497008	Boomerang	*1064005
Batman (1989)	*0642504	Hard To Kill	0053505
Batman Returns	*1029909	Death Becomes Her	*1071505
Howard's End	*1102905	Beetlejuice	0633008
Madonna: Truth Or Dare	*0232900	The Addams Family	*1000900
Madonna:		The Commitments	0691303
The Immaculate		Scent Of A Woman	*1121300
Collection	0693403	Rear Window	0213405
Field Of Dreams	0602006	The Hunt For	
Indecent Proposal	*1142006	Red October	*0082400
Pain Of No Return	*1127100	Backdraft	*0059005
Return Of The Jedi	*0035404	The Silence Of The	
A Few Good Men	*1106301	Lamb	0605309
Unforgiven (1992)	*1084003	Patriot Games	*1051309
The Last Of		Alien	0000208
The Mohicans (1992)	*1071406	Aliens	0360206
Dances With Wolves	*0605200	Alien 3	*1042506

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Robin Hood:		Prince Of Thieves	*0576603
Predator	*0364901		
Predator 2	*0104307		
Top Gun	0426908		
2001: A Space Odyssey	*0844308		
Passenger 57	*1067709		
E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial	0681106		
Lethal Weapon	0630606		
Lethal Weapon 2	*0642702		
Lethal Weapon 3	*1051507		
Raging Bull	*0050005		
Pink Floyd: The Wall	*0258004		
Eric Clapton: Unplugged	1038405		
The Hunger	*0255505		
King Kong			
60th Anniversary Edition	1021005		
Reservoir Dogs	*1106905		
Field Of Dreams	0602006		
A League Of Their Own	*1078005		
Far & Away	*1048507		
Always	*0921502		
The Prince Of Tides	*0847103		
Portion	0788703		
Fatal Attraction	0439307		
Hook	*0654307		
Toys	*1103306		
Star Trek -			
The Motion Picture	*0203505		
Star Trek II -			
The Wrath Of Khan	*0201301		
Star Trek III -			
The Search For Spock	*0201606		
Star Trek IV -			
The Voyage Home	*0430603		
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LETTERS

Equipment for Music Only

Michael Klasco's "Acoustical Tune-Up" in January was quite good in describing how to get rid of unwanted sound reflections, but he did not get into the room interactions of different speaker designs. Some speakers use reflections from the walls behind them to increase realism, and others use narrow-angle vertical dispersion to eliminate ceiling and floor echoes. Which is best for music-only listening as opposed to movie soundtracks? Is there a better approach to building a sound system for music listening only rather than one for both audio and video? Do I need either DSP or Dolby Pro Logic for true reproduction of music? How many channels do I need?

RICHARD SCHULKIND
Sharon, MA

In masters, reflections off the walls are less problematic than reflections off the floor and ceiling, and, in fact, people prefer to hear some sound arriving from the sides. In two-channel stereo this lateral sound is provided by reflections of the output from a pair of speakers at the front of the room; in surround-sound systems, whether based on Dolby Surround or DSP ambience enhancement, it comes predominantly from additional speakers placed for that purpose. Whether it is desirable to restrict the vertical dispersion of front speakers depends more on whether they can be placed at ear level than on what type of program they will reproduce.

Very few music recordings are encoded for Dolby Surround, though the number is growing, so if you're not interested in playing movie soundtracks you probably don't need Dolby Pro Logic. Good multichannel ambience enhancement is very nice, though, and in the future we expect there will be a move to discrete multichannel digital recording for both music and soundtracks. In short, for listening strictly to music you probably would be quite happy with a good two-channel stereo system. You probably would be even happier, though, with four or more speakers fed from a high-quality DSP-based ambience-enhancement system.

Audio Cables

Most people who buy audio/video systems aren't physicists and have to rely on very subjective and opinionated evaluation equipment—their ears! But in January "Technical Talk," about audio cables, Julian Hirsch contends that "believing is hearing" and that we are brainwashed into conclusions about sound quality that are "pure nonsense."

Perhaps Mr. Hirsch can't hear the difference between audio cables, and that's fine.

He's saving lots of money using 16-gauge zip cord in his system. But allow us hobbyists to "fool" ourselves into purchasing cables that make our systems sound better. I say "the Emperor" does have new clothes, and audio cable can make a significant difference in the performance of a good hi-fi system.

STEVE SWANK
Bellingham, WA

Thanks to Julian Hirsch for telling it like it is in "Audio Cables: Fact and Fiction." I have always suspected the claims for these overpriced cables and guided myself accordingly. For line-level cables between components feeding the amplifier I have always used, without any problems, the least expensive Radio Shack cables. For speaker wire I went to Sears and bought outdoor 16-gauge wire. To my ears my system is performing perfectly.

JULIUS BRODSKY
S. Ozone Park, NY

Digital Dubbing Rights

One major issue has been left out of the discussion about the Serial Copy Management System (SCMS). If I record a demo tape, a local concert, or another original work using a DAT deck (or another type of digital recorder), I am limited to making first-generation digital copies. If I want to edit a digital copy of the original and use that as the copying master, I am stuck because of SCMS unless I buy a digital mixing board and turn it off. Is there any hope for DAT users like me?

GARY CHAMBERLAIN
Warner Robins, GA

Professional DAT decks are not required to honor SCMS, so that would be an option. Pro models do typically cost more than consumer decks, however. If you're careful, going through a cycle of digital-to-analog-to-digital conversion will entail little or no loss of sound quality; that might be the most practical solution, if not the ideal one.

Powering a Subwoofer

December's "The Lowdown on Subwoofers" was ambiguous regarding power needs. How much power should a subwoofer get? The same amount as the main channels? Or would less be sufficient since it handles only a small fraction of the music?

CHRIS D. LUBERTO
Nesconset, NY

The article was ambiguous on that point because it is not possible to be more definite. It depends on the relative sensitivities of the main speakers and the subwoofer, the crossover frequency between them, the low-bass



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content of the music typically played on the system, and so forth.

More on Surround EQ

In a reply to two letters in December, you said that equalization can be used with no negative effect on the surround-sound experience "so long as it is applied to the signal after decoding rather than ahead of it." Wouldn't that always be the case? Doesn't the signal always go through the equalizer after passing through the amplifier?

Also, we are usually told that Dolby Pro Logic should be used only for movie soundtracks that were mixed (or remixed) for surround sound. But wouldn't any stereo soundtrack, even an older one, benefit from being played in Pro Logic mode in order to anchor the dialogue to the screen?

Finally, some CD's, including all-instrumental recordings, have been issued in Dolby Surround. When the sound of a symphony orchestra is played with Dolby Pro Logic decoding, what comes out of the center-channel speaker? Wouldn't it be better to play such a recording in another surround mode such as Hall? MICHAEL PORTANTIERE
New York, NY

An equalizer never goes after an amplifier. It might be placed between a preamplifier and power amplifier—or between a surround decoder and a power amplifier. Usually, however, equalizers are connected to a tape loop or external-processor loop, which would be immediately downstream of the receiver or preamplifier's input selector and ahead of any other circuitry. There's nothing to prevent you from switching in a Dolby Pro Logic decoder on any program material, even plain music. What you will get with programs not specifically encoded for Dolby Surround playback is a shifting of the stereo image toward the center, possibly other slight image inaccuracies, and somewhat unpredictable behavior by the surround speakers, which may not sound right all the time.

A music release mixed for Dolby Surround playback should have a very firm center image. In order for the imaging and the frequency response of the surround channels to come out right, however, it really should be played through a Dolby Pro Logic decoder. Any added ambience effects should be introduced after decoding.

In response to Deric Christensen's letter in December, you said, "If you just want to use an equalizer for ordinary stereo listening . . . put it into the tape-monitor loop, where it can be easily switched in and out of the system. Just make sure it's bypassed when the surround decoder is engaged."

Why? I leave my equalizer on because I think it sounds better that way. Do I have a tin ear? Am I doing any harm to any component? RAYMOND A. BISWANGER, JR.
Slippery Rock, PA

An equalizer in the tape-monitor loop will be ahead of the surround processor and therefore is best not used when the processor is engaged. The reason for not equaliz-

ing before decoding is that Dolby Pro Logic steers signal components to the various output channels according to their relative amplitudes and phases in the encoded stereo input signal. An equalizer can change those characteristics in ways that will cause errors in surround decoding. To apply equalization after decoding, you need access to the individual processor outputs and power-amplifier inputs. Some A/V receivers provide the necessary connections, others don't. And with a conventional stereo equalizer, you'd be able to equalize only two of the four channels, unless you used two equalizers.

Illogical MD Pricing?

In a local record store recently, I noticed a classical MiniDisc—an all-digital recording by a reputable orchestra—selling for \$7.99, while a blank 60-minute MD was \$12. Why would a prerecorded MD, whose price needs to cover royalty payments for the music, the musicians' fees, the recording and mixing costs, and the disc itself, cost less than a blank disc? ANDREW PETERMAN
New Orleans, LA

Prerecorded and recordable MD's are quite different. The magneto-optical recordable discs are considerably more expensive to manufacture than the prerecorded kind, which are pressed the same way as CD's and cannot be erased and re-recorded. This situation may improve, but Sony does not expect much change this year.

Whose Tattoo?

Thank you for publishing my letter in December ("Tattoo Who?") about Parke Puterbaugh's Porno for Pyros review, in which he compared that group to Van Halen, described as "fronted by an obnoxious, posturing nincompoop; self-involved, flip-pant, and tattooed . . ." I noted that neither of the nincompoops presently or formerly fronting Van Halen has a tattoo. After my letter appeared, it was brought to my attention that Sammy Hagar, Van Halen's current frontman, does, in fact, have a tattoo. I stand corrected. SUSAN TUDOR
Montgomery, AL

Readers John Martinetto and Michael Delara also told us about Mr. Hagar's tattoo.

Correction

The test report on the Nakamichi MB-4s CD changer in February incorrectly stated that its loading drawer can be opened while a disc is playing. That is not possible. Also, the text mentioned an incorrect price. The correct price is \$399, as given in the accompanying box. □

We welcome your letters. Please address correspondence to Editor, Stereo Review, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. You should include your address and telephone number for verification. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

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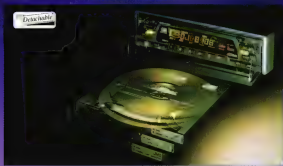
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MOBILE ELECTRONICS



Think about it: The 575x from Boston Acoustics.

The goal of a surround-sound speaker is to create an entirely different world in your living room. To fool your ears into thinking they're inside a submarine. Or a baseball park. Or a heavily armored Petrusian galactic battle fortress. Surprisingly, ordinary surround-sound speakers producing direct sound can't pull this off. But the new Boston 575x dipolar surround



Sound from the 575x ricochets off your walls, ceiling and floor (not to mention your lava lamp) before it gets to your ears. The result: a listener-encompassing sound field.

speaker can. With ease. That's because it takes full advantage of reflected sound to create a realistic listening experience.

The advantage of the 575x is tough to pinpoint.

In order to fool your ears, a surround system must create a diffuse sound field all around you, rather than one your ears can pinpoint. In a movie theater, this is accomplished by placing several large speakers (usually our highly respected Boston A70T commercial surrounds) on side walls at regular intervals. But unless you live in a renovated dirigible hangar, you probably can't do the same thing. So, we reasoned, instead of filling your walls with speakers, why not design a pair of

speakers that fills your walls with sound. Here's how. On either side of the 575x is a 2 1/2-inch tweeter/midrange—one firing forward, the other back. These drivers are out of phase with each other (i.e., when



The 575x has no hang-on about where it's firing, sounding equally good on either ceiling or wall.


one is pushing air out, the other is pulling air in), which is known as a dipolar configuration. Aiming toward the center of the room is a single 5 1/4-inch woofer that radiates low frequencies which the human ear cannot localize. When mounted on a side wall or the ceiling, the sound from the two tweeter/midrange drivers reflects off several things—rear and front walls, the ceiling, the floor, your prized



Not since the Von Trappe has a family sounded this good—The Boston Family of THX home theater speakers, featuring 555x left/center/right speakers, 555x subwoofers and 575x surrounds.

swizzle stick collection—before it reaches your ears. You can't tell where the sound is coming from. It's all around you. It sounds real. (With ordinary speakers that fire





Understanding why the new 575x is a superior surround speaker takes some reflection.

toward the listener, sound is easily localized, and the effect is lost.)

Small, yet powerful: The Yoda of surround speakers.

At just eight pounds, the 575x demonstrates some pretty impressive specs. For example, the home THX® standard says that a surround speaker must handle at least 100 watts of power. The 575x is rated to 125. This translates into a speaker that handles a huge

amount of energy and sonic information, cleanly. With virtually zero distortion. Other vital stats: The 575x comes complete with a handy bracket for easy wall mounting. Plus, it's available in either black (for those who want to show off their cool, new speakers against clean, white walls) or white (for those who don't).

It's a THX surround. It's a Pro Logic® surround. It's a breath mint.

It is true. Boston engineers have gone to the trouble of creating a perfectly tuned and matched set of speakers that meets the rigid specs set down by George Lucas for home

THX systems. They include 555x left/center/right speakers.

Powerful 595x subwoofers. And

575x dipolar surrounds. But if you own a Dolby® Pro Logic® receiver, the 575x is the ideal surround for you, too. How can a surround speaker be perfect for both THX



Get our mini-magazine **Numbers**. It's 60 pages of cool music, movies and nearly free CDs (plus lots of photos for those with short attention spans). Write: Boston Acoustics, Dept. 363, 70 Broadway, Lynnfield, MA 01940.

and Dolby? Easy. The laws of physics and sonics don't change when logos do. Both THX and Dolby Pro Logic benefit from a diffuse sound field for realistic surround effects. Which is what the 575x does best. In fact, we believe that the 575x is the finest surround speaker ever conceived—regardless of the playback standard. (Just kidding about the breath mint thing.)

In order to be a better couch potato, you need to leave the house.

Get your hand out of those cheese curls, grab your car keys and visit your local Boston dealer. There, you can witness firsthand the impressive sound of the 575x surround speaker. Not to mention the entire line of Boston Acoustics home-theater components. We bet you've never heard anything like it. Unless, of course, you've actually been inside a heavily armored Petrusian galactic battle fortress before.

Boston Acoustics
Just what's important

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Let's clear up the confusion. Use the 575x in a THX system, and it sounds great. Use it in a Dolby Pro Logic setup, and it also sounds great. Sound good? Great.

TIME DELAY



30 Years Ago

In the March 1964 issue, Technical Editor Larry Klein reported on a demonstration of the British-made Telcan home video recorder, a \$200 unit that recorded TV pictures on standard quarter-inch audio tape. Noting its potential to "initiate a new era in home entertainment," Klein was nonetheless disappointed with the results. "I did not find the picture quality acceptable," he



Freeman Model 600, 1964

wrote, "although a number of my colleagues did not share my negative reaction."

New products this month included the Freeman 600 three-speed tape recorder with built-in amp and speakers (\$399.50), the H.H. Scott 350C stereo FM tuner (\$224.95), and the Superex

ST-M stereo headphones, which had separate woofer and tweeter elements and a miniature crossover in each earpiece. In test reports Julian Hirsch went hands-on with the Hadley 601 power amplifier, rated at 40 watts per channel, and "experienced the same sense of total ease and almost limitless power reserve I associate with the two or three finest amplifiers I have used."

Listening to Prozac? In a review of an Angel disc of Poulenc's *Stabat Mater*, William Flanagan called the piece "a magnificent work and a moving one" despite its "breathtaking musical vulgarity."



20 Years Ago

Letters to the Editor: Reacting to the then-current vinyl shortage, reader S. Phelps of Columbia, New Jersey, suggested that the record industry "set up procedures to collect discs people don't want any more—there must be millions just lying around."

Ray Davies (center) with the Kinks, 1974



Sansui's
QRX-3500
receiver,
1974



In Best of the Month, Igor Kipnis endorsed an Argo recording of English virginal music played by harpsichordist Colin Timney ("Superbly stylish, deeply felt, and musically penetrating"), and Noel Coppage came out for the Kinks' "Preservation Act I" ("Ray Davies does more with melody than any post-Beatles rock composer"). Elsewhere in the review sections, Eric Salzman knocked Murray Perahia's Schumann recital on Columbia ("An excellent pianist, but his Schumann has not yet ripened"). And Joel Vance, confronting Gregg Allman's "Laid Back," declared, "If Gregg Allman ever made a public statement that the earth is flat, I would give it serious consideration."

New products this month included the Hear-Muffs QM-440 four-channel headphones, with drivers positioned in front and back of each ear, the Dokorder 7140 four-channel reel-to-reel tape deck (\$549.95), and the Magneplanar Tympani speaker systems with dynamic panel drivers. In test reports, Julian Hirsch called the Sansui QRX-3500 four-channel receiver "the most effective and universal matrix receiver we have seen" and praised Electro-Voice's equalized Interface: A speakers for "a level of undistorted bass far superior to that of any other speaker of its size."

Field of Germs: In a profile of Michael Tippett, viewed as Benjamin Britten's competitor for the title of Greatest Living British Composer, Bernard

Jacobson quoted an unnamed source to the effect that, "If Britten sneezes, they record it."



10 Years Ago

New products this month included the Sanyo CP200 CD player, which could be programmed to play up to sixteen tracks in any order (\$549.94), the B&W DM2000 five-sided speaker, whose enclosure was designed to reduce internal standing waves that could interfere with bass/midrange cone motion, and the Koss Porta Pro headphones, with a frequency response rated from 15 to 25,000 Hz. In test reports, Julian Hirsch evaluated the unique Nakamichi RX-505 autoreverse cassette deck, which turned cassettes over rather than reversing the direction of play, and declared it "a member of that small, elite group of cassette decks that truly deserve the appellation 'state of the art.'"

Hollywood Babylon Revisited: Puzzled by a lyric in Juice Newton's "Dirty Looks" album—"Some people die before their time . . . but I want to go like Sal Mineo"—reviewer Alanna Nash asked, "What does that mean? That she wants to be stabbed in a parking lot by a pizza delivery boy?" —Steve Simels



Genesis—Live: The Way We Walk Vol. 1: The Longs (Atlantic) 467-373



Nirvana—In Utero, Serve The Servants, Heart-Shaped Box, plus others, (Geffen) 467-159



Billy Joel—River Of Dreams, Title out, All About Soul, many others, (Columbia) 463-696



Aerosmith—Get A Grip, Cryin', Live On The Edge, Eat The Rich, etc. (Geffen) 458-075



Blind Melon, No Rain, Tones Of Home, I Wonder, Soak The Sin, more, (Capitol) 447-996

Genesis—Live: The Way We Walk, Vol. 2: The Longs (Atlantic) 467-381

Reba McEntire—Greatest Hits Volume Two (MCA) 467-016

Melissa Etheridge—Yes I Am (Island) 466-763

The Breeders—Last Splash (Elektra) 465-351

Fourplay (Riancur, Mason, James, East)—Between The Sheets (Warner Bros.) 464-578

Babyface—For The Cool In You (Epic) 464-222

Mark Chesnut—Almost Goodbye (MCA) 463-273

Billy Ray Cyrus—I Won't Be The Last (Mercury/Nashville) 463-240

The Black Crowes—Shake Your Money Maker (American) 462-184

Barbra Streisand—Back To Broadway (Columbia) 461-988

AC/DC—Live (ATCO) 463-217

"Addict"—Orig. Snikr, (Walt Disney Records) 463-167

4 Non Blondes—Bigger, Better, Faster, More! (Interscope) 458-042

Red Hot Chili Peppers—What Hits? (EMI) 448-209

Columbia House.

The Face of Rock.



Toni Braxton (LaFace) 464-362

Spyro Gyra—Dreams Beyond Control (GRP) 467-951

Clay Walker (Giant) 467-448

Seal—Kiss—Water (3rd Stone/Atlantic) 466-979

The Cure—Show (Elektra) 466-062

Conway Twitty—Final Touches (MCA Nashville) 466-607



Gin Blossoms—New Miserable Experience (A&M) 463-737

George Howard—When Summer Comes (GRP) 465-534

Pat Metheny Group—The Road To You (Geffen) 465-626

Kenny Loggins—From The Redwoods (Columbia) 466-393

Bob Dylan—The 30th Anniversary Concert (Columbia) 465-187/395-196

James Taylor—Live (Geffen) 463-487/393-498

Miles Davis & Quincy Jones—Live At Montreux (Warner Bros.) 466-934

Duran Duran (Capitol) 455-550

B.B. King—Blues Summit (MCA) 463-506

The Black Crowes—The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion (American) 463-192

Dave Koz—Lucky Man (Capitol) 461-948

"Free Willy"—Orig. Snikr, (Epic Soundtrax/MCA) 461-731

Bjork—Debut (Epic) 461-152

Neil Young—Unplugged (Reprise) 460-972

Tears For Fears—Elemental (Mercury) 460-903

The Steve Miller Band—Wide River (Polydor) 460-758

Natalie Cole—Take A Look (Elektra) 460-741

Bette Midler—Experience The Divine: Grit Hits (Atlantic) 460-386

Little Texas—Big Time (Warner Bros.) 460-204

Paul McCartney—All The Best (Capitol) 459-776

Kiss—Alive III (Mercury) 459-636

Robert Plant—Fate Of Nations (Es Paranza) 459-024

Tanya Tucker—Genesis Hits 1990-1992 (Liberty) 459-635

Gloria Estefan—Mi Tierra (Epic) 452-497

Andrux—Sound Of White Noise (Elektra) 459-489

Dave Grusin—Homage To Duke (GRP) 459-471

Donald Fagen—Kamikaze (Reprise) 458-463

Toby Keith—(Mercury/Nashville) 459-315

Yanni—In My Time (Private Music) 459-018

Coverdale/Scapellato (Geffen) 457-996

Ronan Neville—The Grand Tour (A&M) 457-200

Primus—Pork Soda (Interscope) 457-192

Chris Isaak—San Francisco Days (Reprise) 456-996

Porno For Pyros (Warner Bros.) 456-970

Sammy Kershaw—Haunted Heart (Mercury) 456-541

Best Of Joe Cocker (Capitol) 455-790

Poison—Native Tongue (Capitol) 454-926

Joe Diffie—Honky Tonk Altitude (Epic) 454-629

Van Halen—Live: Right Here, Right Now (Warner Bros.) 454-470/354-478

"Judgment Night"—Orig. Snikr, (Immortal/Epic) 459-474

Van Halen—Live: Right Here, Right Now (Warner Bros.) 454-470/354-478

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Van Halen—Live: Right Here, Right Now (Warner Bros.) 454-470/354-478

Barbra Streisand—Back To Broadway (Columbia) 461-988

AC/DC—Live (ATCO) 463-217

"Addict"—Orig. Snikr, (Walt Disney Records) 463-167

Bon Jovi—Keep The Faith (Jambico/Mercury) 451-910

Reba McEntire—It's Your Call (MCA) 450-361

Elton John—Greatest Hits 1976-86 (MCA) 460-353

Neil Young—Harvest Moon (Reprise) 450-304

Phil Collins—Sensuous Hits... Live (Atlantic) 448-944

George Strait—Pure Country (MCA) 448-753

Vince Gill—I Still Believe In You (MCA) 448-571

10,000 Maniacs—Our Time In Eden (Elektra) 448-530

4 Non Blondes—Bigger, Better, Faster, More! (Interscope) 458-042

Red Hot Chili Peppers—What Hits? (EMI) 448-209

Foreigner—The Very Best... And Beyond (Atlantic) 447-524

Eric Clapton—Unplugged (Reprise) 448-187

Talking Heads—Popular Favorites 1976-1982 (Sire/Warner Bros.) 445-841/256-848

Michael Bolton—Timeless (Columbia) 444-894

Ugly Kid Joe—Wanted: Avenge's Least Wanted (Mercury) 445-378

George Thorogood And The Destroyers—The Baddest Of The Bad Hits (EMI) 444-505

Megadeth—Countdown To Extinction (Capitol) 444-489

Guns N' Roses—Use Your Illusion I (Geffen) 442-087

Guns N' Roses—Use Your Illusion II (Geffen) 442-087

Dwight Yoakam—This Time (Reprise) 456-913

Lanny Kravitz—Are You Gonna Go My Way (Virgin) 455-782

ZZ Top—Grit Hits (Warner Bros.) 438-010

ZZ Top—Grit Hits (Warner Bros.) 438-010

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ZZ Top—Grit Hits (Warner Bros.) 438-010

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The Face of Rock.

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Enya—Shepherd Moons (Polygram)
431-718

U2—Achtung Baby (Island)
431-213

Frank Sinatra—Sinatra Reprise/The Very Good Years (Polygram)
430-983

Brooks & Dunn—Brand New Man (Arista)
429-969

Mötley Crüe—Decade Of Decadence 91-91 (Elektra)
429-316

Brooks & Dunn—Hard Working Man (Arista)
454-025

"Sleepless in Seattle"—Org. Sndtrk. (Epic Soundtrks)
454-430

Wynonna Judd—Wynonna (JMC/Curb)
435-009

i.d. lang—Ingenue (Sire/Warner Bros.)
435-004

Tina Turner—Simply The Best (Capitol)
433-342

Alice In Chains— Dirt (Columbia)
445-433

Red Hot Chili Peppers—Blood Sugar Sex Magik (Warner Bros.)
429-967

Ozzy Osbourne—No More Tears (Epic Associated)
429-128

"Phantom Of The Opera"—Highlights (Ong London Cast) (Polydor)
424-333

John Cougar—American Fool (Riva)
423-556

Bonnie Raitt—Luck Of The Draw (Capitol)
423-186

R.E.M.—Automatic For The People (Warner Bros.)
440-622

The Cranberries—Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We? (Globe) (Island)
465-658

Soul Asylum—Grave Dances Union (Columbia)
445-510

Cheap Trick—Greatest Hits (Epic)
429-556

Alan Jackson—Don't Rock The Jukebox (Arista)
429-935

Van Halen—For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge (Warner Bros.)
429-273

INXS—"X"—Atlantic
412-106

Garth Brooks—No Fences (Liberty)
411-587

Mariah Carey—Music Box. Dreamlover, Hero, Without You, etc. (Columbia)
465-435

Nirvana—Nevermind (DGC)
442-446

Eric Clapton—Journeyman (Reprise)
400-457

Aeromith—Pump (Geffen)
388-009

Stone Temple Pilots—Core (Atlantic)
453-043

"Dazed And Confused"—Org. Soundtrk. (Giant)
469-446

Cypress Hill—Black Sunday. Insane In The Brain, more. (Hustler/Capitol)
463-996

Spin Doctors—Pocket Full Of Kryptonite (Epic/Asiac)
428-482

Kenny Rogers' Grt. Hits (Liberty)
317-700

AC/DC—Back In Black (Atlantic)
305-545

John Hiatt—Perfectly Good Guitar (Atlantic)
465-385

Janet Jackson—Control. Nasty. (A&M)
454-297

Chris DeBono—Under This Old Hat (Liberty)
461-671

Dire Straits—On The Night (Warner Bros.)
455-448

Vince Neil—Exposed (Warner Bros.)
457-143

Lynyrd Skynyrd—Last Rebel (Atlantic)
454-538

White Zombie—La Sexorcisto (Geffen)
442-079

Stanley Clarke—Fast Rival Drive (Epic)
469-777

Great White—Psycho City (Capitol)
447-565

Faith No More—Angel Dust (Reprise/Slash)
429-007

Tom Cochrane—Mad Mad World (Capitol)
435-685

Pearl Jam—Ten (Epic/Associated)
428-433

The Allman Brothers Band—A Decade Of His 1969-79 (Polygram)
430-438

Rod Stewart—Sing It Again Rod (Mercury)
423-822

Rush—Chronicles (Arista)
430-983/385

The Very Best Of The Righteous Brothers—Unchained Melody (Verve)
423-772

The Moody Blues—Grt. Hits (Polydor)
423-756

Eric Clapton—Time Pieces (Polydor)
423-467

Beat Of The Doolies (Warner Bros.)
291-678

David Bowie—Changeroles (Polygram)
412-247

John Lennon Collection (Capitol)
405-008

Lynyrd Skynyrd—Skynyrd's Innards/Grt. Hits (MCA)
381-129

Roy Orbison—The All-Time Hits, Vols. 1 & 2 (CSP)
371-946

The Who—Who's Better, Who's Best (MCA)
376-057

Fleetwood Mac—Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.)
375-782

Steggenhoff—16 Grt. Hits (MCA)
372-425

Marvin Gaye—Grt. Hits (Motown)
367-565

Best Of The Doors (Epic)
357-616/397-612

Jimi Hendrix—The Ultimate Experience (MCA)
458-034

Aretha Franklin—30 Greatest Hits (Atlantic)
305-752/300-799

Van Morrison—Moodswander (Warner Bros.)
349-803

The Beach Boys—Made In The U.S.A. (Capitol)
349-445

Bad Company—10 From 6 (Atlantic)
341-313

A Decade Of Steady Dan (MCA)
341-073

The Cars Greatest Hits (Elektra)
339-993

The Best Of Kansas (CBS Asiac)
327-742

Motown's 25 81 Hits From 25 Years (Motown)
219-985/299-988

Engles Grt. Hits, Vol. 2 (Asylum)
317-768

Bob Dylan's Grt. Hits (Columbia)
138-086

The Best Of Blondie (Chrysalis)
311-111

REO Speedwagon—Indolence (Polygram)
306-449

Electric Light Orch.—ELO's Greatest Hits (J&J)
300-095

Best Of Carly Simon (Elektra)
291-656

America's Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.)
291-385

James Taylor's Grt. Hits (Warner Bros.)
291-302

Grateful Dead—Skeletons On The Wall (Warner Bros.)
378-406

Jim Croce—Photographs & Memories: Grt. Hits (Saga)
244-968

Santana's Grt. Hits (Columbia)
244-459

Jania Joplin's Grt. Hits (Columbia)
231-670

Simon & Garfunkel's Greatest Hits (Columbia)
219-477

Creedence Clearwater Revival—Chronicle-20 Grt. Hits (Fantasy)
308-049

The Slave Movie Band—Grt. Hits 1974-78 (Capitol)
290-171

Eagles—Grt. Hits, 1971-75 (Arista)
287-003

Eagles—Hotel California (Arista)
286-948

Little Ronstadt's Grt. Hits (Arista)
286-740

Meat Loaf—Bat Out Of Hell (Epic)
279-133

Boyz II Men—Rags & Riches (A&M)
289-209

Jim Croce—Photographs & Memories: Grt. Hits (Saga)
244-968

Santana's Grt. Hits (Columbia)
244-459

Jania Joplin's Grt. Hits (Columbia)
231-670

Simon & Garfunkel's Greatest Hits (Columbia)
219-477

Creedence Clearwater Revival—Chronicle-20 Grt. Hits (Fantasy)
308-049

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- Free Music Magazine sent every four weeks (up to 13 times a year), describing the Regular Selection for your listening interest, plus hundreds of alternatives. And Special Selection mailings up to six times a year (total of up to 19 buying opportunities).
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- 10-Day Free Trial. We'll send details of the Club's special offer with your introductory package. If not satisfied, return everything within 10 days and you will have no further obligation. So you risk absolutely nothing by making the coupon today!

If the application is missing, write to: Columbia House, 1400 North Fruitridge Avenue, Terre Haute, Indiana 47811-1129.

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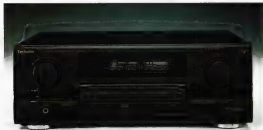
NEW PRODUCTS

▼ TECHNICS

The Technics SA-GX670 A/V receiver features a Dolby Pro Logic decoder, three surround modes, thirty AM/FM presets, a "help" mode for troubleshooting common operating errors, four audio inputs, three video inputs, and a subwoofer output. It's rated to deliver 80 watts each to

the left, center, right, and surround channels. The amp section employs several "voltage rails," said to improve efficiency and minimize heat generation. Price: \$400. Technics, Dept. SR, One Panasonic Way, Secaucus, NJ 07094.

• Circle 120 on reader service card



▼ KINTEK

Designed with home theater in mind, Kintek's Digimate 610 is a modular power amplifier with balanced inputs and six plug-in amp modules, each rated to deliver 125 watts into 8 ohms or 200 watts into 4 ohms. Any pair of modules can be bridged to provide 400 watts into 8 ohms. An

overload-protection circuit reduces gain whenever an "excessive signal condition" is detected. Channel separation is given as 90 dB and distortion as 0.08 percent. Price: \$2,250. Kintek, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 9143, Waltham, MA 02254-9143.

• Circle 122 on reader service card



SONANCE ►

Designed to be mounted in a wall or ceiling, Sonance's M10RB speaker has a 4-inch dual-cone driver in a 7¼-inch-diameter frame with a recessed grille that resembles a lighting fixture. Frequency response is given as 70 Hz to 15 kHz ± 3 dB. Price: \$155 a pair, including mounting hardware. Sonance, Dept. SR, 961 Calle Negocio, San Clemente, CA 92673.

• Circle 121 on reader service card



▲ SALAMANDER DESIGNS

The 36-inch-tall Archetype Rack System from Salamander Designs has five fully adjustable shelves, and it can be expanded with an optional two-shelf extender as shown on left. Price: \$199 and up.

Available with solid walnut, solid cherry, or black-lacquered wood shelves factory-direct from Salamander Designs, Dept. SR, 1 Linden Place, Hartford, CT 06106.

• Circle 123 on reader service card

NEW PRODUCTS

CD ▶

CD's Model 401 storage case holds forty CD's. To get a disc out, you align the sliding indicator with the desired slot number and open the case. Price: \$30. CD's Storage Systems, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 1206, Georgetown, TX 78627.

• Circle 124 on reader service card



▼ JVC

JVC's KD-GT7 car CD receiver accepts three CD's in a removable cartridge hidden behind its detachable faceplate. It features an AM/FM tuner with twenty-four presets, a bass-boost button,

and a four-channel amp rated to deliver 12 watts per channel into 4 ohms. Price: \$800. JVC, Dept. SR, 41 Slater Dr., Elmwood Park, NJ 07407.

• Circle 126 on reader service card



▼ PROTON

Proton's AA-2120 power amplifier is rated to deliver 120 watts per channel into 8 ohms. It features dual-mono construction with a separate power supply for each channel, a tinted-glass front panel with peak-level power meters, and a high-current output section

said to be capable of delivering 20 amperes into a 2-ohm load. Distortion is given as 0.01 percent and dynamic headroom as 2.5 dB. Price: \$700. Proton, Dept. SR, 16826 Edwards Rd., Cerritos, CA 90701.

• Circle 128 on reader service card



▼ CANTON

Canton's Combi 24 DC speaker system comprises a pair of 8-inch-tall satellites, each with a 4-inch woofer and 1-inch tweeter, and a 19½ x 9 x 12½-inch bass module featuring a bandpass design with two 8-inch drivers and dual ports. Bandwidth is given as

22 Hz to 30 kHz. The satellites are finished in black or white satin lacquer, the bass module in black textured vinyl. Price: \$995. Canton, Dept. SR, 915 Washington Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55415-1245.

• Circle 125 on reader service card



▼ SOUNDWAVE

Soundwave's Point Source 3.0 speaker features a five-sided enclosure with two 8-inch woofers and a pair of 1-inch soft-dome tweeters, one at the apex of the cabinet and one on top to add depth to the soundstage. Frequency response is given as

34 Hz to 20 kHz ±3 dB. The 42-inch-tall speaker has an acrylic top panel and is finished in high-gloss black. Price: \$2,390 a pair. Soundwave, Vero Research, Dept. SR, 274 N. Goodman, Rochester, NY 14607.

• Circle 127 on reader service card



Introducing The Next Best-Selling Loudspeaker Of All Time.

**ORDER BY
MARCH 31
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INCREASE
PRICE**

More than 30 years ago, Henry Kloss designed the now-legendary KLH Model Six, the first speaker to fully exploit the potential of two-way design. By using the then-new principle of the acoustic suspension woofer, as well as creating a new type of long-throw integral-dome tweeter, he was able to make a speaker that provided outstanding performance at a moderate cost. A decade later, he took these principles still further with the Advent loudspeaker, one of the best-selling speaker models of all time. Both speakers were considered industry benchmarks for price/performance.

We are now pleased to announce Cambridge SoundWorks' Model Six, a two-way system named in honor of Henry Kloss' first ground-breaking two-way system.

Not An "Extension Speaker."

Model Six is not an "extension speaker." It's a serious *main* speaker with sufficient frequency range and power-handling to satisfy serious listeners. Model Six speakers, when combined with a good receiver and CD player, comprise a music system for \$500-\$600 that seriously outperforms typical pre-packaged "shelf" or "rack" systems.

Two-Way Design Advantages.

We believe that when lowest cost is not the ultimate consideration, the best speaker design is a subwoofer-satellite system like our Ensemble® and Ensemble II systems. But a properly designed subwoofer-satellite system requires three-way design, which entails the cost of two more drivers and a third cabinet. While neither Ensemble system is "high end" in price, a complete stereo system starts at about \$800, still too much for music lovers on a budget.



Model Six continues a long tradition of best-selling, high performance, high value, two-way speakers by Henry Kloss. Very natural, accurate, wide range sound—only \$119 each!

What does Model Six give up compared to our Ensemble systems? With big amplifiers in large rooms, Ensemble and Ensemble II can play louder, and they have greater low-bass extension. They also give you tremendous room-placement flexibility, which allows you to optimize performance, with little impact on the decor of your room.

Costly Components. Thoughtful Design.

At the heart of Model Six are its drivers, a 1 1/2" cone tweeter with center 3/4" dome (the same tweeter we use in Ensemble), and a newly-designed 8" acoustic suspension woofer. While classic in their simplicity, these drivers differ greatly from other moderate-cost speakers.

Model Six's crossover frequency is 2,000 Hz, much lower than many other two-way designs. This makes it possible to ensure smooth, uncolored upper midrange with wide dispersion. Such a low crossover frequency would not work with conventional tweeters. But Model Six's tweeter uses a suspension that allows the "long throws" necessary to reproduce music in this range.

The 8" woofer cone is larger than those usually found in speakers of Model Six's size and price, allowing it to move substantial amounts of air at low frequencies. And Model Six puts emphasis on very low frequencies instead of the mid-bass "rise" common in many speakers. The result is bass that is more accurate and extended than similar systems.

But most important is how Henry Kloss went on to "voice" the system—painstakingly

fine-tuning the octave-to-octave balance. This is the most important factor in determining the overall sound of a speaker.

Elegant Cabinet Design.

We devoted considerable time and effort to making Model Six visually appealing. Convincing simulated wood finishes were chosen—in oak, teak and black ash. A subtly rounded "bullnose" molding frames a medium charcoal grey grill that was custom-woven for Model Six.

Factory-Direct Price: \$119 each!

Because we sell factory-direct, Model Six sells for far less than it would cost in stores. At \$119 each, in your choice of three finishes, it is the value in today's loudspeaker market. If you aren't satisfied, you can return Model Six within 30 days for a full refund.

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CIRCLE NO. 6 ON READER SERVICE CARD

QUANTITIES LIMITED



\$499

The Country's Best Value In A Stereo System?

We've matched Model Six speakers with a best-selling stereo receiver and CD player to create what may be the best value ever in a stereo system. The receiver has 40 watts a channel and a remote. The CD player uses 1-bit technology for accurate, natural sound. Priced at only \$499, this is a serious music system for serious listeners.

The Critics Love Ensemble And Ensemble II. What's The Difference, Anyway?

Cambridge SoundWorks changed the audio world when we began direct-marketing Ensemble® by Henry Kloss. Ensemble is a revolutionary dual-subwoofer/satellite speaker system offering all-out performance, without cluttering up your room with huge speaker cabinets. Available only factory-direct from Cambridge SoundWorks, with no expensive middle-men, Ensemble is priced at hundreds less than it would have sold for in stores. *Audio* magazine says Ensemble "may be the best value in the world."

And Then There Were Two.

Now Cambridge SoundWorks has introduced Ensemble II, a more affordable version of Ensemble using only one cabinet to hold both subwoofer drivers. Ensemble II has joined Ensemble in the ranks of the country's best-selling speak-



The real difference is in the subwoofer.

ers. We believe Ensemble II is a better system than its best-known competitor. And because we sell it factory-direct, it's half the price. *Stereo Review* said "Ensemble II performs so far beyond its price and size that it can be compared only with much larger speakers at substantially higher prices." We agree with the writer who said, "It's hard to imagine going wrong with Ensemble." The question is, which Ensemble system is right for you?

The Same Satellite Speakers.

When you listen to either Ensemble system, almost 90% of the music you hear is being reproduced by the satellite speakers. Both Ensemble and Ensemble II use satellite speakers that are virtually identical.*

Unlike many competing systems, Ensemble's satellites are true two-

way speaker systems, each containing a high performance tweeter and a 4-inch woofer. *Stereo Review* said, "The Ensemble satellites delivered a smoother output than

True acoustic suspension, sealed subwoofer cavity

Cavity acts as acoustic band-pass filter.



"Ensemble may be the best value in the world."
Audio



many larger and more expensive speakers."

Small (8 1/2" x 5 1/4" x 4") and unobtrusive, they'll fit into the decor of any room. They're available in scratch-resistant gunmetal grey Nextel, or primed so you can paint them any color you wish.



Ensemble satellite speakers are available primed for painting, so they can match your decor exactly.

The Same Overall Sound.

In many rooms, Ensemble II sounds virtually the same as Ensemble, especially when Ensemble's two subwoofers are placed right next to each other. The real difference between the two systems is that Ensemble, with its two ultra-compact subwoofers (12" x 21" x 4 1/2"), gives you *ultimate placement flexibility*.

The Same Attention To Detail.

Ensemble and Ensemble II are constructed with the very best materials and no-compromise workmanship. Their subwoofers use heavy-duty woofers in true acoustic suspension enclosures. The satellites are genuine two-way systems with very high quality speaker components. Individual crossover networks are

built into every cabinet for maximum wiring flexibility. Robust construction is used throughout, featuring solid MDF cabinets and solid metal grilles.

The Same Factory-Direct Savings.

Cambridge SoundWorks products are available *only* factory-direct. By eliminating the middle-men, we're able to sell Ensemble and Ensemble II for hundreds less than if they were sold in stores.

The Same 30-Day Total Satisfaction Guarantee.

Choosing a loudspeaker after a brief listen at a dealer's showroom is like deciding on a car after one quick trip around the block. So we make it possible to audition our speakers the *right way*—



Stereo systems featuring Ensemble and Ensemble II speakers by Pioneer or Philips electronics start at only \$799, including CD player. Dolby Surround Sound systems start at only \$999.

in your own home. You get to listen for hours without a salesman hovering nearby. If within 30 days you're not happy, return your speaker system for a full re-

fund. We even reimburse original UPS ground shipping charges in the continental United States.



The only difference in satellites is that the original Ensembles use gold-plated connectors that allow use of even the heaviest gauge wire.

The Real Difference: The Ultimate Placement Flexibility Of Dual Subwoofers.

Placement of bass and high-frequency speakers in a room—and how those speakers interact with the acoustics of the room—has more influence on the overall sound quality of a stereo system than just about anything. As an alternative to spending hundreds (or thousands) of dollars on this or that "latest" amplifier or CD player design, you should invest some of your time experimenting with various speaker positioning schemes. Ensemble's two ultra-slim (4 1/2") subwoofers give you more placement flexibility than any speaker system we know of (including Ensemble II), and is most likely to provide the performance you want *in the real world...in your room.*

How To Order.

The dual-subwoofer Ensemble system is available in two versions. With handsome black-laminate subwoofers for \$599. Or with black vinyl-clad subwoofers for \$499. Ensemble II is priced at \$399. For more information or to order call our audio experts, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We'll send you our 64 page color catalog with stereo and surround sound components and systems from Cambridge SoundWorks, Pioneer, Philips, Denon and others. Because we sell factory-direct, eliminating expensive middle-men, you can save hundreds of dollars.

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"Ensemble II performs so far beyond its price and size that it can be compared only with much larger speakers at substantially higher prices."

Stereo Review



NEW PRODUCTS



◀ ANVT

Tiny microphones in ANVT's NQ100 Noise Quieting headset convey noise signals to a patented circuit that generates an "anti-wave" said to reduce external noise by 18 dB in the 30-Hz to 1.4-kHz range. The battery-powered headphones are suitable for use with Walkman-type portables in such noisy environments as plane cabins. Price: \$189. Active Noise and Vibration Technologies (ANVT), Dept. SR, 4824 S. 40th St., Phoenix, AZ 85040-2940.

• Circle 129 on reader service card



◀ CASE LOGIC

Case Logic's SkyDisc line of plastic CD racks, featuring hinged doors, includes the 120-disc-capacity SD-120 (shown, \$50), the 80-disc-capacity SD-80 (\$35), and the 50-disc-capacity SD-50 (\$25). Respective heights are 35, 45, and 30 inches. All are finished in satin black with gloss-black doors (the SD-80 and SD-50 have only one door). Case Logic, Dept. SR, 6303 Dry Creek Parkway, Longmont, CO 80503.

• Circle 130 on reader service card



UNIVERSAL ▶ ELECTRONICS

Universal Electronics' VCRPRO 4 remote control can operate up to four components, including a cable TV box, and can be used to set up any VCR for unattended recording. Simple questions that appear in the remote's LCD panel guide the user through a step-by-step procedure. Price: \$80. Universal Electronics, Dept. SR, 1864 Enterprise Parkway W., Twinsburg, OH 44087.

• Circle 132 on reader service card

SPECTRUM AUDIO ▶

Spectrum Audio's 14½-inch-tall Model 108c is a ported speaker with one 8-inch coaxial driver. The tweeter's off-center position in front of the woofer is said to improve imaging. Frequency response is 49 Hz to 20 kHz \pm 4 dB. Price: \$349 a pair. Spectrum Audio, Dept. SR, 1021 Nevada St., Toledo, OH 43605.

• Circle 131 on reader service card

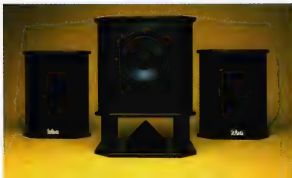


▼ KBA

The LS-300 powered speaker system from KBA comprises two 12¼-inch-tall two-way speakers, one of which houses a 10-watt-per-channel stereo amplifier, and a bass module with a built-in 18-

watt amplifier. Bandwidth is given as 20 Hz to 10 kHz. Price: \$489. KBA, Inc., Dept. SR, 256 Commerce Dr., Suite 471, Peachtree City, GA 30269.

• Circle 133 on reader service card



DESIGNS BY HENRY KLOSS

Our new Center Channel and Center Channel Plus speakers are magnetically shielded, so they won't cause video interference, even when placed very near a TV screen.



Our Center Channel Speakers Deliver Optimum Pro Logic Performance At Factory-Direct Prices.

Cambridge SoundWorks sells two speakers designed by Henry Kloss specifically for use as center channel speakers in Dolby Surround Pro Logic systems—the Center Channel and Center Channel Plus. Our experience with Dolby Surround Pro Logic systems has shown that the center channel is very important. A significant portion of movie soundtracks is directed to the center channel. It's crucial to use a speaker that reproduces that material



accurately, with the proper volume level and dispersion pattern.

Center Channel by Henry Kloss.

Center Channel is a compact, two-way acoustic suspension speaker with a 4" woofer and a ring radiator tweeter. Because of its compact size (8 1/2" x 5 1/2" x 4"), it's simple to place Center Channel directly on top of or below your TV screen, so that dialog and sound effects will seem to emanate from their on-screen source.

Center Channel is well shielded magnetically so that it can be placed very close to your TV without causing video interference. Acoustically identical to our Ensemble satellite speakers, it's ideal for center channel use in a Pro Logic system. The factory-direct price of Center Channel is \$149.

Center Channel Plus by Henry Kloss.

The Center Channel Plus is a larger speaker recommended for achieving theater-like playback levels in the most sophisticated and powerful home theater systems. It uses

four 3" long-throw woofers and a tweeter that perfectly matches the acoustics of our Ensemble® and Ensemble II systems. The frequency range of the outer pair of 3" woofers is intentionally limited to maintain proper dispersion characteristics.

Because of its wide, low profile (25" wide, 4" high, 6 1/2" deep), Center Channel Plus is ideal for placement directly on top of or, uniquely for a product of its type, *beneath* a TV—with optional support unit, it can act as a base for your TV. We don't know of any speaker, at any price, that outperforms Center Channel Plus. The factory-direct price of Center Channel Plus is \$219.

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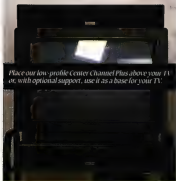
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CIRCLE NO. 6 ON READER SERVICE CARD



Place our low-profile Center Channel Plus above your TV or, with optional support, use it as a base for your TV.

NEW PRODUCTS

▼ T-TECH

T-Tech's Positiv-I speaker combines an 8-inch woofer, a 5-inch midrange driver, a titanium-composite tweeter, and a defeatable 125-Hz high-pass filter in a 24-inch-tall walnut-veneered

cabinet. Its low-frequency limit is 60 Hz. The Positiv-I is available factory-direct for \$1,800 a pair. T-Tech, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 151, Hudson, MA 01749.

• Circle 134 on reader service card



▼ SOUND DECOR

Sound Decor's Shaker Table is a speaker incognito with a 5½-inch woofer and a piezoelectric tweeter. Bandwidth is given as 45 Hz to 20 kHz and power-handling capability as 75 watts continuous. The 22-inch-tall table is available

in solid maple, solid cherry, or with a hunter-green or satin-black finish. Available factory-direct for \$875 a pair. Sound Decor, Dept. SR, 225 Old Oak Dr., Cortland, OH 44410.

• Circle 137 on reader service card



▲ BGM CONCEPTS

BGM offers two Novotube CD lowers: the 50-disc T-50 (right, \$75) and the 144-disc T-144 (left, \$199). The plastic units are available in twelve colors. BGM Concepts, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 202902, Austin, TX 78720-2902.

• Circle 135 on reader service card

▼ DYNACO

Dynaco's PAS-4 preamplifier uses vacuum tubes in its phono and line stages. It features tape dubbing/monitoring selectors, a mute button, a processor loop, and five inputs. Total harmonic

distortion is given as 0.025 percent at 2 volts and gain as 40 dB phono, 18.5 dB line. Price: \$898. Dynaco, Dept. SR, 125 Cabot Ct., Hauppauge, NY 11788.

• Circle 136 on reader service card



▼ BEL CANTO DESIGN

Bel Canto's Aida is an outboard digital-to-analog converter that features a third-generation sigma-delta conversion chip, proprietary circuitry said to virtually eliminate clock jitter, and both XLR and RCA analog outputs. It is

available finished in black, silver, or white with one coaxial and one optical input or two coaxial inputs. Price: \$1,900. Bel Canto Design, Dept. SR, P.O. Box 396, Excelsior, MN 55331.

• Circle 138 on reader service card



80s FOR THE PRICE OF 70s WITH NOTHING MORE TO BUY, EVER!



Blind Melon
Cubism (Capitol) 54234

Tears For Fears
Elemental (Mercury) 04390

Alan Jackson: A Lot About Livin' (And A Little 'Bout Love) (Arista) 74074

Garth Brooks: The Chase (Liberty) 00141

Elton John: Greatest Hits 1970-1986 (MCA) 00150

AC/DC: Live (Atlantic) 00201

Neil Young: Harvest Moon (Reprise) 00208

R.E.M.: Automatic For The People (Mercury) 00121

Frank Sinatra: The Best Of The Capitol Years (Capitol) 00242

Randy Crawford: Don't Say It's Over (Warner Bros.) 25086

Phil Collins: Serious Hits... Live! (Atlantic) 00324

Paul Simon: Concert In The Park (Warner Bros.) 20724

Common Thread: Songs Of The Eagles (Mercury) 25071

Snare: 12 Inches Of Snow (East West) 01286

Lee Ritenour: Wes Sound (GRP) 01327

Pertinax: Brahms, Violin Concerto (EMI Classics) 01321

Jimi Hendrix: Experience: Electric Ladyland (MCA) 25440

Moody Blues: A Night At Red Rocks With The Colorado Symphony Orchestra (Polygram) 01339

James Brown: 20 All-Time Greatest Hits (Polygram) 01342

k.d. lang: "EVEN COWGILLS GET THE BLUES" (Sdtk) (Warner Bros./Sire) 35119

Shirley Horn: Light Out Of Darkness (For Ray Charles) (Verve) 04395

The Souls Of Mischief: 93 Tili Infinity (Jive) 01624

Joe Sample: Invitation (Warner Bros.) 01356

Dwight Yoakam: This Time (Reprise) 01360

Depeche Mode: Songs Of Faith And Devotion (Reprise/Sire) 01362

Joshua Redman: Walk (Warner Bros.) 73296

Alan Parsons: Try Anything Once (Arista) 01586

Aerosmith: Get A Grip (Geffen) 20814

Concrete Blonde: Mexican Moon (Capitol) 25533

Jason Browne: I'm Alive (Elektra) 25039

Talking Heads: Speaking In Tongues (Sire) 01421

Michael Franks: Dragonfly Summer (Reprise) 01427

Grateful Dead: In The Dark (Arista) 01642

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Porno For Pyros: Uprising (Tuff Gong/Island) 01682

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SIGNALS

BY KEN C. POHLMANN

Pony Car

When Henry Ford built his first gasoline-powered car in 1896 he envisioned it as transportation for the masses. True to his dream, he soon went on to invent mass production (an innovation that was even more important than the car) so that his company could make its cars affordable. More specifically, Ford manufactured one kind of car—the Model T. It was designed to be an everyman, one-size-fits-all vehicle. Ford nixed specialty attachments because they would only have increased the cost and probably defeated the entire concept. In a legendary summation of his philosophy, Henry Ford proclaimed that customers could have a Model T in any color they wanted, as long as it was black. Options were the last thing on his mind. The idea of car sound systems probably never occurred to him.

In April 1964, at the New York World's Fair, the Ford Motor Company introduced a sporty little car called the Mustang. Its styling was distinctive: long hood, short hopped-up rear deck, scoops on the sides, and a galloping pony on the grille. Its base six-cylinder engine supplied a modest 101 horsepower, but an optional V-8 engine upped that to 164 horsepower. Unlike the Model T, the Mustang came in a variety of colors, including such 1960's favorites as poppy red, sunlight yellow, and skylight blue. In terms of its sound system, the car was primitive (as were most cars in those days). The \$2,368 base price did not even include a radio. Two audio options were available: You could get a pushbutton radio with an antenna and a dash speaker, or you could enhance that package by adding a rear speaker. High-tech audio features like cassette players were still years away.

The Mustang was an instant hit among Baby Boomers, who were starting to get their driver's licenses. A savvy restaurateur advertised that

his hotcakes were "selling like Mustangs." A Chicago dealer called the police when customers stormed his showroom. Ford's twelve-month sales estimate of 100,000 was achieved in four months, and the "pony car" went on to break the record for first-year car sales with a total of 417,000. Mustang-frenzied parents even purchased 93,000 pedal-powered mini-Mustangs during the 1964 Christmas season.

Today, 6.1 million Mustangs later, the Mustang is celebrating its thirtieth birthday with a complete redesign—the first significant makeover in well over a decade. The new car—which represents a \$700 million effort—is pure Mustang, combining contemporary engineering with its design heritage. The base car, either coupe or convertible, is a V-6 with 145 horsepower, but there is also a V-8 model with 215 horsepower, and a 240-

convertible). Each amp channel has two bands of fixed equalization and uses voltage limiting to restrict distortion at high volume levels.

The system also sports four woofers. Coupes have 5½ x 7½-inch woofers—two in the front doors and two in a rear-deck-mounted 15-liter enclosure; convertibles replace the rear pair with two 5¼-inch woofers in the quarter panels. The woofers are powered by a pair of 85-watt, voltage-limiting amps with one band of fixed equalization. Overall, the system pumps out 230 watts of continuous power, 460 watts peak.

If you want more, the Mach 460 system can also be fitted with an in-dash CD player for an additional \$475; it mounts just below the cassette tuner. Still not satisfied? You can have the dealer install a ten-disc CD changer for another \$500 or so. Not

The Mustang is celebrating its thirtieth birthday with a complete redesign and a host of impressive new sound-system options.

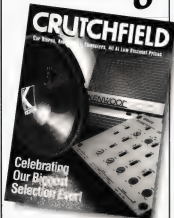
horsepower Cobra model will be available this spring.

Of course, the sound system is light years beyond the 1964 offering. The standard package includes a stereo AM/FM radio with 24 watts of maximum power and four speakers. But it's the new Mustang's audio options that really demonstrate just how far car audio has come over the last thirty years. The Mach 460 system (\$670) boasts a feature-packed cassette tuner, eight speakers, and six channels of amplification. Four of the amplifiers, each rated to deliver 15 watts continuous with no more than 2 percent distortion, drive four 2½-inch midrange-tweeters mounted in ½-liter enclosures—two in the sail panels (where the outside mirrors attach) and two in the rear package tray (in the coupe) or rear quarter panels (in the

quite cutting-edge enough for you? Get a MiniDisc player instead of the CD tuner for about \$700. In fact, the Mustang is the first car sold in America that can be fitted with a factory-authorized, dealer-installed MD player. The Sony-built DIN-size unit features a twelve-character display that scrolls disc and track titles and a 4-megabyte buffer memory that holds 10 seconds of audio data, insuring uninterrupted playback no matter how hard you're pushing your pony.

Imagine what Henry Ford would say if he returned for a look at the new Mustang. Certainly its engineering sophistication would astonish him. The Mach 460 sound system would probably mystify him. But, after a few minutes of contemplation, he'd probably vault into a convertible and take off. A black one, of course. □

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AUDIO Q & A

BY IAN G. MASTERS

Future Shock?

Q I'm in the market for an A/V system, but I'm worried that anything I buy today will be obsolete tomorrow. Will today's components be able to process things like digital radio? Will today's VCR's be able to handle high-definition TV? Or will we eventually have to scrap what we're buying now? If so, if I decide to wait for tomorrow's technology, how long will it take?

JAMES F. DONNELLY
Croton-on-Hudson, NY

A The ol' crystal ball is a bit cloudy on the specifics, but I think it's fair to assume that the technological development will never be finished, so if you hold out for the ultimate expression of home entertainment equipment you could wait forever. But most change in this field builds on what already exists, so even though things like digital radio may require that you buy a new piece of equipment to receive it, the amplifier and speakers you buy today will be able to handle the new signal source. And though today's VCR's will definitely be incapable of handling high-definition TV, that's still a long way off; even if a standard were set tomorrow, it would still be years before programming became plentiful and prices dropped within the reach of the average consumer. In the meantime, why deny yourself what's available today?

Light on the Subject

Q When I close the door on the tape well of my cassette deck, the light inside goes out. It usually reappears when I press a function button and then fluctuates in this way several times as I use the machine. The deck seems to record and play normally whether the light is on or off, but I'm concerned that performance may be affected. What's causing the problem, and can it be repaired inexpensively? SCOTT A. BURGESS
Elyria, OH

A It's probably nothing more than a loose connection, and since it doesn't seem to affect your recordings, I wouldn't worry about it. If the fault results in clicks in the audio signal, or if you really must be able to see where you are in a cassette, the problem should be cheap to fix.

dbx Tapes

Q I put together my system about ten years ago and included both cassette and open-reel tape decks with dbx noise reduction. Until I switched to CD's some years later, almost all my music was record-

ed on tape using dbx. I maintain all of my components carefully, but if my tape decks begin to deteriorate, what are the chances of obtaining parts so I can continue to enjoy my encoded tapes?

BOB POLLACK
Junco Beach, FL

A Not too good, I'm afraid, at least as far as the dbx circuitry is concerned, but fortunately that's not likely to fail. More delicate are the heads and the mechanical parts of your recorders, and these should be easier to replace. You might consider spending a few bucks now to have the manufacturer bring your tape decks up to spec and replace anything that's worn. That should insure at least as many years of good performance as you've already had, as long as you continue your careful maintenance regimen. I have recorders more than twenty years old that are still going strong.

Cassette Settings

Q I have a cassette deck with dual transports, but it has only one setting for oxide type. Is it possible to dub from a normal (Type I) tape to a Type II cassette with my machine, or is it even advisable to use a Type II tape in it?

SCOTT HUGHES
South Easton, MA

A If there are no bias or equalization options, your deck is set up for "normal" ferric-oxide (Type I) tape. You can use Type II (high-bias) tape in it, but audio quality will be compromised. If, for example, you wish to copy a Type II tape to Type I, the playback equalization for the original will be wrong, and the sound will be somewhat bright (which may be pleasant but is inaccurate). If you copy a Type I tape to Type II, the latter will be underbiased, which will also result in high-frequency emphasis as well as increased distortion and reduced midrange headroom. Again, it may sound okay, but if you combine the two effects—Type II to Type II—the result would probably be unbearable. In any event, experiment to see what happens.

Subrumble

Q I do my listening in a special music room in the basement with double walls, ceiling, and insulation. The music is played on a high-quality stereo setup with DSP ambience enhancement. When I added a powered subwoofer several years ago, I noticed that with some CD's a low-frequency thump or rumble would creep into the music now and then. At first I thought it was someone walking across the floor up-

stairs, but as soon as I switched out the subwoofer the sound—almost a feeling—would stop. I couldn't seem to isolate the piece of equipment where the problem originated, and then I heard it on a recording played on FM. I have since heard it on other selections played by the same station. I'm at my wits' end—is there something wrong with my system?

JOHN D. RAHOY
St. Louis, MO

I doubt it very much. I suspect you are hearing what a lot of new subwoofer owners notice, especially if they listen mostly to classical music: low-frequency noise on the recordings themselves. Many recordings are made in actual concert halls, even if no audience is present, and few of these are truly isolated from certain types of external noise, notably traffic rumble and air-conditioning sounds. In lots of cases, especially in old recordings, the engineers didn't know the sounds were there because their monitor speakers couldn't reproduce them. It may be cold comfort, but it's not at all uncommon for home stereo equipment like yours to have better performance than professional gear, particularly at the frequency extremes. About the only thing you can do is to roll off the bass or turn off the subwoofer when it happens. Or leave it there and appreciate the realism of it all.

Double-Duty Amplifier

Q My Dolby Pro Logic decoder provides a single center-channel line output and a single subwoofer output. Could I use an ordinary stereo amplifier to drive a center speaker and a subwoofer? If so, would it provide adequate channel separation?

JOE MORGAN
Kuwait City

A As long as the amplifier has enough power to drive the subwoofer without distress, you should have no problem. Channel separation should be much more than enough.

Out-of-Phase Surround

Q I have noticed that some surround speakers use dual drivers wired out of phase to achieve a nondirectional ambient sound. Does this technique provide any advantage over conventional speakers? And if it does, could I accomplish the same thing by wiring my two conventional surround speakers out of phase with one another?

KELLY MURLEY
Commerce Township, MI


A One of the aims of a surround system is to create a sound field that seems to envelop you without your being aware of the side or rear speakers as distinct sound sources. This effect can be enhanced by speaker placement or design.

A number of manufacturers, including all who produce Home THX-certified speakers, employ a quasi-dipole design for the surround channel, in which two drivers

are placed back-to-back and wired out of phase with one another. Like a true dipole (a single diaphragm radiating front and back), this arrangement creates a figure-eight radiation pattern, with most of the sound being directed forward and backward, relatively little to the sides. If the speakers are positioned so that the side "nulls" are aimed toward the prime listening area, the direct sound from them will be much weaker than the sound reflected off the walls and ceiling, making localization unlikely. It's only one technique for making

the surround sound as diffuse as it should be, and it works only because the drivers are close together. Simply wiring a pair of conventional speakers on opposite sides of the room out of phase would not produce the same effect.

If you have a question about audio, send it to Q&A, Stereo Review, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Sorry, only questions chosen for publication can be answered.



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AND THIS
JUST IN
FROM
METROPOLIS...

Good news for folks who find TV's *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* a little too sweetly romantic compared with the Man of Steel's comic-book adventures. Time Warner AudioBooks has released "Superman Lives!," a 2½-hour cassette extravaganza (Dolby Surround, original orchestral score) inspired by last year's *Death of Superman* comics saga. Unlike the network version, this aural incarnation of the Caped Kryptonian (originally produced by the BBC) has all the superheroic ultraviolence you could want, quite realistically conjured. How the tape will play to a generation for whom radio drama is a quaint form of nostalgia remains to be seen, of course, but Time Warner may be onto something—at last count the *Death of Superman* comics had sold upwards of 25 million copies.

ON REZ RECORDS

TWO TO TANGLEWOOD

Pianist Judith Lynn Stillman, the youngest musician ever to be admitted to the Juilliard School's doctoral program, is a frequent guest at



RICHAUD COMANOVICH CLASSICAL

music festivals. It was at Tanglewood, the renowned summer home of the Boston Symphony in the Berkshires, that she first met trumpet player Wynton Marsalis, who later became one of her students at Juilliard. They recently collaborated on their first recording, a collection of modern works for trumpet and piano titled "On the Twentieth Century." The Sony Classical CD includes works by Bernstein, Ravel, Poulenc, and Hindemith.

CAIRO TREHMAN/SONY CLASSICAL



STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Apparently music—as well as politics—makes strange bedfellows. Case in point: the debut album by Nashville's *The Bis-Quits* (the first rock band signed to folkie John Prine's Oh Boy label). Amidst brilliant originals like *Remembrance* (a cover of a song by the late, great John Prine) and an inspired cover of Richard Thompson's *Walking on a Wire*, we discovered a lucky cover for *For Me*, which turns out to be nothing less than a rewrite of *Johnny B. Goode* in honor of the classical cellist. The genesis of this unlikely tribute? "We used to do a thing at rehearsals called the Rockabilly Challenge," the *Bis-Quits'* leader/guitarist Will Kimbrough told us. "Somebody would call out a song—any song—and we'd have to do it rockabilly style. And one time I just started singing about Yo-Yo Ma. I mean, it's a great name, and I had heard him on NPR and thought he was great. Besides—'Leonard Rose' just doesn't swing."



MUSICAL MUSCLE

Pianist Tzi-mun Barta's bare-chested publicity photos and good looks may have attracted attention in a few places where classical music is rarely noticed, but ultimately it was the quality of his recordings that established him as a contender in the arena of young classical musicians. His latest recording, "Popular Encores," was set for release by EMI Classics in February.



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CIRCLE NO. 28 ON READER SERVICE CARD



MUSIC MAKERS



DANCING WITH THEMSELVES

In case you hadn't noticed, the punk revival is definitely upon us. Safety pins and ripped T-shirts are *haute couture*, there's a new album by the **Buzzcocks**, **Guns n' Roses** has released cover versions of songs by punk progenitors, and **Generation X**—1976's pretty-boy alternative to the **Sex Pistols**—got together for a one-shot reunion. Appearing unannounced after a solo show promoting former Gen X leader **Billy Idol**'s current "Cyberpunk" album at London's Astoria club, the foursome roared through such spike-haired classics as *Ready Steady Go* and *Your Generation* to the delight of an aging (but still pogoing) crowd. "In retrospect, Generation X was such a great group," bassist Tony James commented afterwards. "It was like being in the Who."



A KOREAN-AMERICAN IN PARIS

Conductor **Myung-Whun Chung**, musical director of the Bastille Opera in Paris, started 1994 with two big releases on Deutsche Grammophon. January brought Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* with soprano **Maria Ewing** in the title role. February brings Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite*. Chung is now in the U.S. guest conducting in Cleveland and Chicago.



BUT IT'S NOT IN COORAMA

If you're considering buying "Road Kill," the new video collection by heavy-metal bad boys **Skid Row**—and is there anyone among us who *isn't* considering it?—be advised that it comes with an interesting bonus. Along with the usual concert footage and backstage antics, the video (on A*Vision, VHS or laserdisc) features a clip of *Psycho Love* in astonishingly realistic 3-D (no kidding—we checked it out for ourselves). Fortunately, two pairs of 3-D glasses are included, so that, in the words of navel-baring Skid Row frontman **Sebastian Bach**, "no one has to watch it alone."

CARLY'S OPERA DEBUT

As a child **Carly Simon** saw enough at the Metropolitan Opera, thanks to her well-intentioned parents, to steer her far away from Wagner and Verdi and toward one of the legendary careers in pop music. Still, at forty-seven Simon retained enough fondness for the Met to create words and music for a children's opera, *Romulus Hunt*, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera Guild. After well-received performances last year at New York's Lincoln



Center and Washington's Kennedy Center, it was recorded by EMI's Angel Records and is now available in record stores. Plans are in the works for more staged productions across the country. Watch for it, and take the kids.

You need the right tone of voice to say Home Theater

In a movie theater, the speaker you never see is the center channel. That's because it's located directly behind the screen, so dialogue sounds as if it's coming directly from the actor's mouths. Although movie screens have tiny holes in them to allow the soundtrack to pass into the theater, the screen material absorbs so much high frequency information that filmmakers are forced to boost the treble content of the soundtrack. Unfortunately, when a film is transferred to videotape or laserdisc, this high frequency boost remains, resulting in dialogue that is unnaturally harsh and much too "up front" for home theater. While most speaker manufacturers design their center channel systems to be acoustically flat—a noble goal, they completely ignore the question of overly bright dialogue reproduction.

To overcome this problem, Atlantic Technology's Model 153 C Center Channel Speaker gently rolls off the high frequencies for smooth reproduction of

center channel dialogue information. When designing the 153 C, our R&D team spent countless hours listening to a wide variety of film and television soundtracks. These tests allowed us to perfectly tune the Model 153 C for extended listening, without the brittle, misdirected and harsh sound often associated with center channel loudspeakers. The result is rich, natural sounding vocal reproduction. Simply put, the right tone of voice.

At Atlantic Technology, we specialize in home theater. We listen to our customers and to movies with equal excitement, then deliver components that are as much about value as they are about performance. That's why *Video Magazine* said "In its price range, Atlantic Technology is currently very hard—if not impossible—to beat." Call 617-762-6300 and refer to Dept. A for more information and the name of your nearest Atlantic Technology dealer.

A black, rectangular center channel speaker with a mesh grille. It features two large circular drivers on the left and right sides, and a smaller central driver. The Atlantic Technology logo is visible on the bottom center of the grille.

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TECHNOLOGY

343 Vanderbilt Ave. Dept. A
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CIRCLE NO. 5 ON READER SERVICE CARD

"Deserve's got nothin' to do with it."

If you can name the movie the above quote is from, the character who said it, and the actor who played the role, you can be entered in a drawing to win our Center Channel Speaker. Send your answers on a postcard to Atlantic Technology, Contest Dept., 343 Vanderbilt Ave, Norwood MA 02062. Contest ends 3/31/94



TECH TALK

BY JULIAN HIRSCH

Tuner Tests

A convenient music source for many people, FM radio at its best delivers truly excellent sound quality. Unfortunately, its ultimate performance is usually compromised by such problems as multipath interference, inadequate signal strength, interference from local sources of radio-frequency (RF) noise or from other stations, and signal processing (such as compression) purposely applied by the broadcaster for various reasons, as well as by tuner imperfections.

As with amplifiers, there is a comprehensive Electronics Industry Association (EIA) standard for testing FM tuners: IEEE Standard 185-1975 (now in the process of being updated) covers virtually every aspect of performance. Some of its tests are of limited value (notably the misnamed "usable sensitivity," generally regarded as an unusable-sensitivity rating, since a signal of the specified level would indeed be unlistenable) or obsolete, but many others are still quite useful. Among the most important measurements, which we make on every tuner and receiver, are 50-dB quieting sensitivity in both stereo and mono modes, the ability to reject stronger signals 200 or 400 kHz from the desired signal (adjacent- and alternate-channel selectivity), the signal-to-noise ratio at a 65-dBf signal input, frequency response, and stereo cross-talk or separation (the extent to which a left-channel signal also appears in the right channel, and vice versa).

The term "dBf" may be unfamiliar. Tuner sensitivity used to be rated in microvolts (millionths of a volt) of signal required at the antenna input to produce a stated level of performance at the tuner's output. But a tuner's performance actually depends on the signal *power* at the antenna terminals, not the voltage. Depending on whether the antenna-input impedance is 75 or 300 ohms, the voltage for exactly the same performance could differ by

a factor of two. To eliminate that confusion, the 1975 tuner-testing standard calls for specifying signal strength in decibels relative to a standard power level (dBf), rather than as a voltage. The 0-dBf reference level is 1 femtowatt (10^{-15} watts), 3 dBf is 2 femtowatts, 6 dBf is 4 femtowatts, and so forth.

The 50-dB quieting sensitivity is the input required for a fully modulated signal to produce an audio output 50 dB greater than the tuner's noise output with an unmodulated signal. This measurement applies to both stereo and mono reception and roughly defines the weakest signal that provides useful reception. High sensitivity (a low number) is important if you want to listen to a faraway station or have a poor antenna; in a strong-signal area, however, it may be not only unimportant but even undesirable. Poorly designed tuners can easily be overloaded by strong signals, creating distortion or spurious responses at other frequencies. In such cases it may actually be necessary to *attenuate* the input to the antenna terminals.

Frequency response is seldom a

program itself can deliver. Image response—interference from signals 21.4 MHz above the FM channel—can be important if you live close to a busy airport, where aircraft communications with the control tower might blot out some FM stations on a tuner with a low image-response ratio.

Capture ratio (a measure of a tuner's ability to reject the weaker of two signals on the same frequency) and AM rejection can be very important in fending off the ill effects of multipath. A common, often severe reception problem, especially in cities, multipath occurs when a broadcast signal and one or more very slightly delayed reflections of it from buildings or other features of the local terrain are all picked up by the same antenna. For minimum distortion in such situations, capture ratio should be low (preferably close to 1.0 dB) and AM rejection high (up around 70 or 80 dB).

Not every test we perform is of equal importance to every listener, but most of them do help to define a good or not-so-good tuner. Excellent tuners are available at relatively affordable prices (\$400 to \$600), and highly sat-

A *FM tuner's capture ratio and AM rejection can be very important in fending off the ill effects of multipath.*

problem in tuners, since most are flat within a decibel or two up to the 15-kHz limit of FM transmission. And distortion readings, though important, can be misleading, because what is measured as "distortion" (especially in stereo) often consists mainly of spurious signals outside the audible frequency range rather than harmonics of the modulating signal. These may indeed be audible under certain conditions, but not in the same way as conventional audio distortion.

Channel separation is a standard measurement, but unless it is very poor (less than 20 dB or so), you probably will get as good a stereo image as the

isfactory ones for somewhat less. The differences are often much less obvious than those between speakers, or even amplifiers, however, depending largely on how difficult the reception conditions are. Most receivers have adequate, though not outstanding, tuner sections, whose quality seems to be only loosely related to price.

In closing, let me say that for really difficult long-range or weak-signal FM reception, the most important thing is *not* the tuner, assuming it achieves decent overall performance, but the antenna! The best tuner in the world cannot bring in a signal that never reaches its input terminals. □

SONY



WHAT IF CASSETTES WEREN'T CASSETTES?

YOU COULD FIND A SONG IN A SECOND.

Ever try searching for a song on cassettes? You could grow old waiting for the tape to wind its way through the player. It makes you wonder why they ever called it "fast forward!"

But now there's MiniDisc—the ultra-miniature music carrier that's personal and portable. MD uses laser optical technology to find your music instantly and precisely. So no matter where your favorite songs are located, you'll never play that old waiting game again.





Amazingly portable, the MZ-E2 MD Walkman™ Player is about as small as a cassette box. It weighs just 7-1/4 ounces and can operate up to 7-1/2 hours on batteries. Bringing the power of MiniDisc performance to all of your on-the-go activities.*

YOU COULD CARRY A LOT MORE TUNES.



If you think cassettes when you think of portability, think again. Thanks to the digital magic of MiniDisc, your albums are smaller, lighter and more mobile than ever before. In fact, you can store nearly four MiniDiscs in the space of one cassette.

And there are hundreds of great albums on MiniDisc. From labels like Atlantic, BIS, Capitol, Capriccio, Chrysalis, Columbia, DMP, Elektra, EMI, Epic, Liberty, Reprise, Rykodisc, SBK, Sony Classical, Virgin and Warner.

YOU COULD LISTEN FOR A LIFETIME.

While you may love to jam with your music, you don't want your music to jam. Or stretch. Or wear out due to constant use.

MiniDisc has a better way. Each album comes in its own special cartridge that protects against fingerprints, scratches and abuse. And MiniDiscs play without contact, so the discs

never wear. What's more, all MiniDisc players feature electronic shock protection. So even if you encounter some bumps in the road, your music shouldn't skip a beat.

YOU COULD ENJOY MUSIC NON-STOP.

When it comes to getting into music, nobody "flips" over cassettes. Because flipping from Side A to Side B has to be one of the least loved rituals around. Even auto reverse players interrupt the music enough to ruin the rhythm.

With MiniDisc, there's never any interruption to slow you down. You get up to 74 minutes

of continuous music on each album. And if that's not enough, our car MD Changer can carry four MiniDiscs at a time, for nearly 5 hours of entertainment.





Why be limited to one cassette when you can play four MiniDiscs? The Sony MDX-400 Car MD Changer is an in-dash head unit that comes with an easy-to-load 4-disc magazine. There's also AMP M diversity tuning, rotary remote and detachable face security. The MDX-400 can even control an optional Sony Unit link® CD-changer or digital preamp.



YOU COULD RECORD AS NEVER BEFORE.

It takes a lot of effort to record on cassettes. First you have to plan your music program. Then you have to determine if you have enough tape. And if you ever want to replace a song, you might as well start all over again.

MiniDisc makes it easy. You can resequence songs at the touch of a button. If you erase a track, all subsequent tracks are

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SONY

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TEST REPORTS



Yamaha CX-2 Audio/Video Preamplifier

DAVID RANADA • TECHNICAL EDITOR

The slow but steady seep of video capabilities into traditional audio components is no better exemplified than by the CX-2, Yamaha's next-to-the-top separate preamplifier. It provides not only connections and switching for the audio outputs of a videodisc player and two VCR's, but also for both composite-video and S-video signals from such devices. Audio-only connections are provided for a CD player, a moving-magnet (MM) or moving-coil (MC) phono cartridge, a tuner, and two audio recorders.

Apart from the video switching, the CX-2 is a fairly basic, though not minimalist, preamp. Most of its features are controlled by knobs and switches hidden behind a flip-down front-panel door. There are knobs for bass, treble, channel balance, and loudness compensation, a switch labeled Pure Direct that routes the audio around those circuits, an independent recording-source selector, and an infrasonic-filter switch effective only on the phono input. There are three front-

panel indicator lights, for power, Pure Direct, and muting (a 20-dB reduction of output level switched from the supplied infrared remote).

Similarly straightforward, the CX-2's back panel has horizontally arrayed input jacks, enabling easy access by feel from the front. The video jacks for A/V components are segregated from the corresponding audio jacks, a minor inconvenience, but the layout makes for a low-profile enclosure. Also on the back panel are three switched AC outlets (maximum 200 watts total), a push switch for selecting moving-coil or moving-magnet

operation of the phono section, and a muting-control jack that connects via a supplied cable to Yamaha's MX-1 and MX-2 power amplifiers. The CX-2's programmable, multicomponent remote control switches power, selects sources, activates muting, and raises or lowers the volume. Most of the handset's numerous buttons are devoted to the functions of other components (CD player, tuner, and so forth). That's about it for features.

Performance is something else again. Our test results tell only part of the technical story, which can be summarized easily: The Yamaha CX-2 was a superb performer in every significant respect.

The tone controls proved to be unusual. Used alone, the bass knob had a very wideband effect, extending into the low treble even at moderate settings (between 9 and 3 o'clock). But when I turned the treble control to approximately the same setting as the bass control, the bass circuit's high-frequency effects were partially canceled. Turning both tone controls to the same setting gave the effect of a graphic equalizer adjusted for a broad boost (both controls turned down) or dip (both controls turned up) centered at approximately 2 kHz (the "presence" range).

DIMENSIONS

17 1/4 INCHES WIDE, 3 1/2 INCHES HIGH,
12 1/2 INCHES DEEP

PRICE

\$799

MANUFACTURER

YAMAHA ELECTRONICS CORP., DEPT. SR,
666 ORANGECORP AVE.,
BUENA PARK, CA 90620

TEST REPORTS

The action of the infrasonic filter was, in fact, confined to infrasonic frequencies, although it would be more beneficial if its rolloff started higher, up in the audio range (or, better, if it had a steeper slope), and if the filter applied to all inputs, not just phono. The loudness-compensation system requires you to set the maximum playback level with the volume control and then reduce the volume using the loudness knob, which progressively applies a bass boost and a smaller treble boost as the level is lowered. As these things go, it is a superior approach now rarely used. The Pure Direct switch produced no reliably measurable differences in performance. Then again, in some categories the CX-2's measured performance with Pure Direct switched off already approached the performance limits of the Audio Precision test equipment we use.

The one very minor anomaly we found was leakage of power-line hum and its harmonics into the signal from 60 Hz up to around 1.5 kHz. But the hum components were all at least 91 dB below the reference output level of 0.5 volt, thus quite a bit below the threshold of audibility in typical setups. I certainly never heard them. Moreover, at frequencies above 2 kHz, where the ear is most sensitive to noise, the CX-2 was considerably quieter than a theoretically perfect CD player playing a theoretically perfect recording. Indeed, the CX-2's hiss levels were lower than one could obtain from a theoretically perfect 18-bit CD, if there were such a thing. Few other preamps are that quiet. The CX-2 is about as digital-ready as it is possible to be.

Its video-readiness is more limited, although the video-switching circuitry was admirably clean and neutral in operation. The CX-2 contains no surround-sound decoder and has no specific provisions for hooking up a decoder's multiple outputs. On the other hand, such features would add cost and complexity that many potential users might not want. The CX-2's video capabilities will be most useful in A/V systems that are *not* set up for surround sound, or in systems that incorporate an outboard surround pro-



MEASUREMENTS

All measurements except for those related to the phono input were made through the CD input. Performance through the other line-level inputs was essentially identical.

Output at clipping (1 kHz) 9.6 volts

Distortion (THD+N at rated 1.5-volt output) 0.0034%

Input overload level 10.8 volts

Sensitivity (for a 0.5-volt output)

CD 50 mV

phono (MM) 0.84 mV

phono (MC) 41.4 μ V

Signal-to-noise ratio

(A-wtd, re a 0.5-volt output)

CD (500-mV input) 97.9 dB

phono (MM, 5-mV input) 85.5 dB

phono (MC, 0.5-mV input) 75.9 dB

Phono-input overload

(1-kHz-equivalent levels, MM/MC)

20 Hz 167 mV/8.9 mV

1 kHz 167 mV/8.7 mV

20 kHz 113 mV/5.7 mV

Phono-input impedance

..... 44,000 ohms in parallel with 230 pF

RIAA phono-equalization error

(20 Hz to 20 kHz) -40.07, -0.18 dB

Frequency response (tone controls centered)

20 Hz to 20 kHz +0.02 -0.11 dB

Tone-control range

100 Hz -47 dB

10 kHz -46 dB

cessor with a master volume control for all channels but no A/V switching capability. Even if you don't need the video switching, it adds little to the CX-2's very reasonable price and does nothing to diminish its superb performance as an audio preamp. □

- AK: Holt's; Fairbanks: Pyramid; Anchorage.
AL: In Concert; Huntsville: Link Audio; Birmingham.
AZ: Linn Electronics; Little Rock.
CA: Jerry's Audio Video; Fresno; Tucson.
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CO: Listen Up; Denver; Boulder, Colorado Springs.
CT: Al Franklin's; Hartford: Carleton's A/V; Danbury: Robert's Music; New London: Sound Playground; Newington: Orange; Manchester; Norwich.
DC: Sibbald; Audio Associates.
DE: Sound Studio; Dover; Newark; Wilmington.
FL: Absolute Sound; Winter Park; Audio City; FL: Lauderdale: Audio Video; Tallahassee: Audio Video Interiors; Melbourne: Invisible Audio; Pensacola: Hoyt Stereo; Jacksonville: Sennous; St. Tampar: Sound Components; Coral Gables: Sound West; Gainesville: Sound Images; Ft. Pierce: Stereotypes; Daytona: Stereo World; Ft. Myers: Nucleus-Stuart A/V; Stuart: GA: Stereo Shop; Martinez: Stereo Video Systems; Marietta.
ID: Audio Center; Honolulu: Classic Audio; Honolulu.
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IN: Good Ear; Bloom.
KS: United Audio Center; Chicago & Suburban Cars & Stereo; Rockford: Joe's Home Center; Quincy: Stereo Studio; Palatine: Select Sound; Naperville: Sterling Elect.; Sterling: Sundown One; Springfield.
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MI: Mac's; Detroit; Troy: Classic Jazz; Holland: Front Row; Ann Arbor: Future Sound; Ypsilanti: Court St.; Lansing: Room; Midland; Saginaw.
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NM: West Coast Sound; Albuquerque; Santa Fe.
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NY: Audio Breakthroughs; Manhattan: East Rock; Lake Grove: Audio Express; Newburgh: Cheung Elect.; Corning: Elmer; Clark Music; Albany; Syracuse: Stereo Exchange; Manhattan; Nanuet: Hart Elect.; Vestal: Innovative Audio; Brooklyn: Listening Room; Scarsdale: Ross Camera; Rochester: Sound Mill; Mt. Volo; Yonkers: Hi-Speaker; Queens: Lambert; Buffalo.
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TEST REPORTS



Bose Lifestyle 5 Music System

JULIAN HIRSCH • HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

A few years ago we reviewed the original Bose Lifestyle music system—an unconventional product designed to simplify the installation and operation of a multiroom music system. It used a three-piece Bose Acoustimass speaker system with the familiar Bose “cube” satellite speakers and a separate bass module that also contained power amplifiers and electronic crossovers for the entire system. The heart of the system was the Music Center, an unobtrusive shelf-top unit combining an AM/FM tuner and CD player with the necessary system controls in an attractive and remarkably compact form. The Music Center was capable of driving an essentially unlimited number of powered loudspeakers, which could be organized into two zones for independent, simultaneous playback of separate pro-

gram sources (such as radio and CD). Another unusual feature was the system's remote control, which used radio waves to transmit commands to the Music Center. This enabled operation of the Lifestyle system from any

room, or even from outside the house, without the line-of-sight path to the handset that would be required for conventional infrared remote control.

Bose has since expanded its Lifestyle line to three models, including an upgraded version of the original system, now called the Lifestyle 10, with improved speakers. Completely new are the lower-price Lifestyle 5 reviewed here and the Lifestyle 3, both based on the somewhat smaller, single-zone Lifestyle 5 Music Center. The Lifestyle 3 includes Bose's Powered Acoustimass 3 Series II three-piece loudspeaker system, whereas the Lifestyle 5 comes with the same Powered Acoustimass 5 Series II speaker system as the top-of-the-line Lifestyle 10. The Series II satellites are appreciably smaller than in the earlier version but retain the pivoting feature that enables the upper and lower cubes of each satellite to be aimed in different directions for best control of the sound's spatial distribution. Each cube contains a single 2½-inch cone tweeter. The bass module, which formerly used a pair of 6-inch drivers, now has a single 8-inch driver in its dual-chamber Bose Acoustimass enclosure.

The Powered Acoustimass 5 Series II speaker system (which is also available separately) has three power amplifiers in its bass module, with a total rating of 200 watts. A 100-watt amplifier drives the woofer, and there are separate 50-watt amplifiers for the satellites. The bass module also contains the electronic crossover circuits and level adjustments for the bass and treble ranges, used for balancing the relative levels of the woofer and satellites as required by their placement in the room. The speaker system's electronics turn themselves on automatically when a signal is detected and off automatically after a period of silence.

The Lifestyle 5 Music Center appears very similar to the original model (now called the Lifestyle 10 Music Center). It contains a CD player and AM/FM tuner and on the rear has three sets of line-level inputs labeled auxiliary, video, and tape. All essential control buttons are accessible in a window on the Music Center's top surface as well as on the remote hand-

DIMENSIONS

MUSIC CENTER: 15 x 2½ x 9 INCHES
SATELLITES: 3½ x 6½ x 4¼ INCHES
BASS MODULE: 14 x 19 x 7½ INCHES

FINISH

SATELLITES: WHITE OR BLACK
BASS MODULE: BLACK
MUSIC CENTER: SILVER
RC-5 REMOTE CONTROL: WHITE

PRICE

\$1,498, INCLUDING RC-5 REMOTE CONTROL

MANUFACTURER

BOSE CORP., DEPT. SR, THE MOUNTAIN,
FRAMINGHAM, MA 01701-9168

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CIRCLE NO. 15 ON READER SERVICE CARD

TEST REPORTS

MEASUREMENTS

TUNER SECTION

All figures are for FM only except frequency response. Measurements were made at the fixed-level outputs.

50-dB quieting sensitivity

mono 15 dBf
stereo 37.5 dBf

Signal-to-noise ratio (at 65 dBf)

mono 71.5 dB
stereo 70.6 dB

Distortion (THD+N at 65 dBf)

mono 0.18%
stereo 0.87%

Capture ratio (at 65 dBf)

..... 1.5 dB

AM rejection

..... 70 dB

Selectivity

alternate-channel 75 dB
adjacent-channel 6.5 dB

Pilot-carrier leakage

19-kHz -61 dB
38-kHz -65 dB

Hum

..... -72 dB

Channel separation

100 Hz 35 dB
1 kHz 35 dB
10 kHz 35.5 dB

Frequency response

FM 30 Hz to 15 kHz +0, -1.6 dB
AM -6 dB at 160 Hz and 2.4 kHz

PREAMPLIFIER SECTION

Frequency response

..... 20 Hz to 20 kHz +0, -0.2 dB

Distortion (THD+N at 1 kHz)

..... <0.1% from 1 to 4.9 volts

CD PLAYER SECTION

Maximum output level

..... 4.4 volts

Frequency response

..... 20 Hz to 20 kHz +0, -0.65 dB

De-emphasis error

..... -0.5 dB at 16 kHz

Channel separation

100 Hz 57.5 dB
1 kHz 57.5 dB
20 kHz 48 dB

Dynamic range

..... 95.5 dB

Quantization noise

..... -82 dB

Distortion (THD+N)

at 1 kHz, -60 to -10 dB <0.032%
at 0 dB, 100 Hz 0.032%
at 0 dB, 1 kHz 0.04%

Linearity error

at -60 dB -0.7 dB
at -70 dB -0.4 dB
at -80 dB -1.6 dB

Interchannel phase shift

..... 2° at 20 kHz

Frequency (speed) error

..... +0.019%

set. You can set the tuner frequency manually by means of buttons hidden beneath the CD cover (to the right of the main controls and display) or you can simply scan up or down the selected band for receivable signals. As many as twenty station frequencies in either band can be stored for recall with the same buttons used for CD track switching.

Although the Lifestyle 5 system is normally supplied with one remote control and one set of speakers, it is capable of feeding multiple powered speaker systems located in different rooms, and additional remotes can be purchased for convenient use throughout the house. You could, for example, listen to music in your bedroom and control the system from there even if the Music Center and primary speakers were in your living room.

The Lifestyle 5 comes with the simplified RC-5 remote control. At extra cost, you can buy the deluxe RC-11

control, which is standard with the Lifestyle 10 system. The RC-11 is black and has more buttons than the RC-5 (thirty-four versus fifteen), plus two slide switches. Both are radio-frequency remotes that can be used from virtually anywhere in or around a typical home.

The RC-11 does provide more operating features than the RC-5 (such as track-sequence programming for CD's), and it is certainly easier to use than a typical receiver or system remote control. Nevertheless, I would opt for the RC-5, which impressed me as having the finest ergonomic design I have ever encountered in a system remote control. If you have difficulty programming a VCR or operating a typical component audio system with its fifty or sixty control buttons, the RC-5 alone might decide you in favor of the Lifestyle 5.

The RC-5's buttons are round, 3/4 inch in diameter, and marked more

clearly and visibly than we are accustomed to seeing. Like the control itself, they are white, with black labels. Pressing any of the source buttons (AUX, AM/FM, CD, etc.) turns on the system and selects that source. Once the system is operating, if AM/FM has already been selected, the AM/FM button toggles between the two bands. As on the Music Center itself, a single pair of buttons is used for CD track selection and for stepping through the tuner's station presets. Below them is another pair of buttons used for fast-scanning a CD or scanning the selected radio band.

Up/down volume buttons smoothly vary the Music Center's output between its maximum level and fully off. There are three more buttons: auto off, mute, and off (the last is black, with white markings). Mute toggles between normal volume and silence (the pause/play button has the same effect, even if CD is not selected). Auto off shuts the system down automatically at a predetermined time. Pressing it once allows the system to play for 75 minutes, and each subsequent press subtracts 15 minutes of playing time. The off button shuts the system down at once.

Bose does not publish typical performance specifications for its products, and in the case of an integrated system such as the Lifestyle 5, it is not practical to make some of the measurements we would ordinarily perform on separate components. Our laboratory tests covered tuner performance (measured at the Music Center's tape outputs), CD-player performance (measured at its fixed-level outputs), frequency response and distortion of the low-level audio stages (through the auxiliary inputs), and loudspeaker performance (using the amplifiers in the bass module).

We measured the loudspeaker frequency response in our listening room, separately for the bass and satellite speakers. The satellites' averaged room response was impressively smooth, varying less than ± 2 dB from 400 Hz to 12 kHz. The close-miked response of the bass module had a mildly double-humped shape with an overall variation of less than ± 3 dB from 50 to 150 Hz. The output fell off

TEST REPORTS

steeply at lower frequencies to about -20 dB at 40 Hz.

The bass-level balance adjustment on the Acoustimass bass module had a ± 6 -dB range about its indicated normal setting. Our measurements and listening tests indicated that the normal setting was optimum for our room and that the useful lower limit of the system's response was around 50 Hz or slightly lower. The treble-level adjustment range was about ± 7 dB at 6 kHz or higher, with a diminishing effect at lower frequencies (down to about 1 kHz). As with the bass, the indicated center setting for the high frequencies gave the most pleasing sound (as well as the most uniform measured response).

Quasi-anechoic MLS response measurements confirmed the excellent response uniformity of the Powered Acoustimass 5 Series II speakers over the useful range of the measurement, from about 400 Hz up. The satellite response at 2 meters varied less than ± 2 dB from 500 Hz to 16 kHz. There was a 5-dB response notch just above 16 kHz.

Directivity measurements with swept noise signals indicated that the response 45 degrees off the satellite speaker's forward axis fell off to -3 dB at 3 kHz, -8 dB at 10 kHz, and -12 dB at 20 kHz. Although the 2½-inch Bose driver is inevitably somewhat more directive than a smaller tweeter, the upper frequencies carry only the high harmonics of a musical program, and the ability to aim the two drivers in each satellite in different directions makes it easy to adjust the effective dispersion as required.

Measuring the distortion of the bass module was not as easy as it is with conventional unpowered speakers. We set the input to produce a 90-dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter from the bass port. Then, with the microphone close to the port, we measured the total harmonic distortion (THD) from 20 to 200 Hz at a constant input level. Readings ranged from 0.3 to 3 percent over much of that range, between about 90 and 170 Hz, and rose to between 5 and 10 percent from 20 to 80 Hz. These results may not be directly comparable with those from a more conventional loud-

speaker, however, because of the signal processing applied by the active circuitry within the Powered Acoustimass 5 Series II. Specifically, it incorporates what Bose calls Dynamic Equalization—an automatic loudness compensator that progressively boosts the bass range as the volume is reduced in order to maintain a consistent tonal balance independent of level. (Without such compensation, there tends to be a subjective loss of bass as the level is turned down because of the ear's reduced low-frequency sensitivity at low volumes.)

The Powered Acoustimass speakers also have automatic protection circuitry to prevent damage to their electronics and drivers from excessive signal levels. Although we could not confirm the operation of the protection circuits by any obvious effect on the

**The Bose Lifestyle 5's
overall sound was as
easy and effortless as
we have ever
experienced from a
home audio system.**

sound, we did find that we were unable to damage anything, or to produce significant audible distortion, even when we played CD's having extreme dynamic range at the system's maximum volume setting—a level so high as to completely preclude conversation.

The overall sound was as easy and effortless as we have ever experienced from a home audio system. Bearing in mind that all speakers sound different to a greater or lesser degree, the Powered Acoustimass 5 Series II system held its own against any other speakers with which we compared it. Its sound was beautifully balanced, with never a hint of the source of the bass, or even that it wasn't coming from the tiny satellite

cubes. Stereo imaging was superb, and the bass was solid down to the 50-Hz region. And despite its small drivers and considerable power, this system is about as "bulletproof" as they come.

The Lifestyle 5 Music Center is the perfect answer to the bulk and complexity of most home audio components. Its FM tuner section proved to be better than we're used to seeing in its most important characteristics—capture ratio, AM rejection, image rejection, and selectivity—and at least average in all others. And though the built-in CD player comes off as somewhat spare in comparison with most separate units, it has all the features most people will ever use, even with the supplied RC-5 remote control. If you want track-sequence programming in addition, just substitute the deluxe RC-11 remote. The player's measured performance exceeded what is necessary for good sound enough that you need not give it a second thought. The transport did tend to skip and mistrack with even light taps on the outside of the Music Center, however, so that should be kept on a solid, stable surface.

To me, the icing on the Lifestyle cake is the RC-5 remote control, which exemplifies the goal of operating simplicity that was clearly at the heart of the system's design. Not once did I have to fumble or search for the desired button, and rarely before have I seen a complex consumer product so well engineered throughout as to be usable by any member of the household without frequent reference to the instruction manual. (That manual, incidentally, is a sizable and weighty 200-page volume, in five languages, that leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to what should be done to achieve any desired result.)

The bottom line on the Bose Lifestyle 5 is that it is an attractive, easy to use, and thoroughly listenable music system that should bring good sound to many households in which a stack of black-finished components and prominent speaker cabinets would not be appreciated. It would be difficult to get better sound at its price, to say nothing of its nearly ultimate operating simplicity. □

TEST REPORTS



Allison Acoustics AL115 Loudspeaker System

JULIAN HIRSCH • HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

Allison Acoustics' AL Series of relatively small loudspeakers feature "room-matched design," meaning that they are intended to deliver the flattest power response when placed so that the center of the front panel is 2 feet from one wall and at least 3 feet from any other. The installation instructions suggest spacings for rooms where those distances are not feasible.

The original research into the effect of room boundaries on acoustic power response was begun by Roy Allison while he was chief engineer of Acoustic Research, and when he later formed his own company, Allison Acoustics, his findings were a key element in the design of its speakers. Last year the company was sold and moved from Massachusetts to Kentucky, but it continues to follow Allison's design principles and to use his distinctive convex-dome tweeter, rec-

ognized for its wide dispersion and extended range.

The AL115 is a two-way system with an 8-inch woofer crossing over to a single Allison Convex Diaphragm tweeter at 2 kHz. The woofer's diaphragm is hand-treated with a proprietary energy-absorbent compound to minimize resonances; the tweeter is cooled and damped with magnetic

fluid. Like almost all the drivers used in Allison speakers, the AL115's are manufactured in the U.S. by Allison.

The woofer, which operates in a sealed acoustic-suspension enclosure, has a rated resonance frequency of 50 Hz. Its low-frequency response is rated as -3 dB at 41 Hz, -6 dB at 33 Hz. The system's nominal impedance is 6 ohms, and its sensitivity is given as 90 dB sound-pressure level (SPL) at 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input.

The AL115 is recommended for use with amplifiers rated up to 150 watts. Its drivers are protected against overload by a thermal current-sensing device, the Allison Power Shield, that shuts down their signal input if the drive current reaches a potentially damaging level. It resets automatically when the drive level is reduced.

The black-woodgrain-finished cabinet has a dark-gray, marbled front panel with rounded edges and a removable frameless plastic grille. The flexible, slightly convex grille snaps into a narrow slot around the front panel. The dome tweeter is also protected by a metal screen. The input connectors, multiway binding posts on 3/4-inch centers, are recessed into the rear of the cabinet.

We mounted the Allison AL115 speakers on 30-inch stands approximately at the recommended distances from the room boundaries. Their averaged room response was flat through the midrange, varying ± 2 dB from 230 Hz to 1.2 kHz. There was a dip of 4 dB at about 2 kHz, followed by a 4-dB peak at 3.6 kHz and a return to midrange levels above 6 kHz.

The close-miked woofer response reached its maximum at 70 Hz, falling at 12 dB per octave below that point and at 3 dB per octave above it, up to nearly 1 kHz. The woofer and room-response curves did not splice as unambiguously as we would have liked, but the composite curve did indicate a maximum bass output at 70 Hz and a treble maximum at 3.6 kHz, with a ± 4 -dB variation over most of the audio range, from 120 Hz to 20 kHz.

A series of quasi-anechoic MLS response measurements showed a rough correspondence to our room-response measurements. Specifically, there was a peak of 4 or 5 dB at 3.6 kHz and a

DIMENSIONS
20 INCHES HIGH, 11 1/2 INCHES WIDE,
10 INCHES DEEP

FINISH
BLACK WOODGRAIN

PRICE
\$460 A PAIR

MANUFACTURER
ALLISON ACOUSTICS, DEPT. SR,
478 STANFORD AVE., DANVILLE, KY 40422

TEST REPORTS

dip of about 4 dB at about 10 kHz, with the output rising by 2 or 3 dB from 10 to 20 kHz. Since MLS measurements in our room are possible only above 300 Hz, we could not use them to verify our judgment in splicing the woofer and room-response curves.

The Allison tweeter's dispersion was outstanding, with a level change over a 45-degree angle off the forward axis that did not exceed 2 dB up to 10 kHz, 7 dB at 15 kHz, and about 10 dB at 20 kHz. Group delay was very constant over most of the audio range, except for a jog at the 2-kHz crossover frequency (which was not clearly evident in most of our measurements).

The minimum impedance readings were 4 ohms at 20 Hz and between 100 and 150 Hz, 3.6 ohms at 10 kHz. There was a rise to 11 ohms at the 56-ohm bass resonance and a 20-ohm maximum at 1.5 kHz.

Sensitivity measured 89 dB SPL at 2.83 volts, very close to the 90-dB rating. We measured woofer distortion with an input of 3.2 volts, corresponding to a 90-dB SPL. It was slightly below 1 percent over most of the range from 1 kHz down to 70 Hz, rising to 2 percent at 60 Hz, 4.5 percent at 50 Hz, and 8 percent at 40 Hz.

The woofer cone bottomed with a single-cycle 100-Hz burst of 270 watts. At 1 kHz, the amplifier clipped at 470 watts before the speaker cone reached its limits, and at 10 kHz the amplifier delivered a single-cycle

burst of 1,785 watts without damage to the tweeter or even audible distress.

In listening tests, the Allison AL115 proved to be even better than our measurements would suggest. The various features of our response measurements were not identifiable, for the most part, or else imparted positive qualities to the overall sound. Heard side by side with some other speakers we had on hand, the AL115's frequently proved to be more listenable, partly because of their exceptional transparency in the high frequencies. It seems likely that this transparency derives from the convex-dome tweeter.

Although not particularly strong in the low bass, the AL115 could hardly be described as deficient in the lower octaves, and it was notably free from the middle- and upper-bass emphasis that so often colors reproduction of male voices.

The principal anomaly in our performance measurements—the peak at 3.6 kHz—was not audibly obvious. Perhaps it was partly responsible for the crispness that we sometimes heard, but if so its effect was no greater than those of the response variations of most speakers. We found the crispness to be a plus, but it is a matter of taste.

The Allison AL115, neither the cheapest nor the most expensive small two-way speaker system, is a good value. Hear it if you can, if only to decide whether its sound appeals as much to you as it did to us. □



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B&W 2003 Loudspeaker System

JULIAN HIRSCH • HIRSCH-HOUCK LABORATORIES

The new 2000 Series from B&W consists of five inexpensive speakers featuring a new front-baffle design. The contoured, molded polypropylene panel, with a large-radius curved surface, is ribbed to increase stiffness and eliminate resonances. B&W says that this design surpasses previous ones in its freedom from edge diffraction, resulting in exceptionally transparent sound and natural imaging. To satisfy the special requirements of audio/video home theater systems as well as conventional stereo installations, all the B&W 2000 Series speakers (including an acoustically and cosmetically matched center-channel model) incorporate the company's Zero Magnetic Field (ZMF) shielding system, enabling them to be placed close to a TV set or video monitor without disturbing the picture.

The Model 2003 is next to the top of the series. It is a two-way system based on a single 6½-inch woofer

with a damped acrylic-fiber cone and a rubber surround operating in a vented enclosure. The crossover, at 3 kHz, is to a 1-inch dome tweeter with a damped polyester diaphragm and magnetic-fluid cooling.

The woofer, in the center of the front panel, is protected by a frameless, perforated PVC grille that has minimal effect on the system's acoustic output. The bass port is below it and the tweeter above it. The cabinet

would normally be installed in a vertical position and is ideal for stand mounting. Multiway input binding posts are recessed into the back panel near the top of the cabinet. Although they will accept single banana plugs, they are deliberately placed too far apart to allow the use of dual banana plugs. (This is common practice in Great Britain, where B&W speakers originate, since standard dual banana plugs can be inserted into British AC outlets.)

For our room-response measurements and listening tests, we placed the B&W 2003 speakers on 30-inch stands about 9 feet apart and 18 inches in front of a wall. The room response, averaged for the left and right speakers, was exceptionally flat and smooth from 500 Hz to 20 kHz, with just a ± 2 -dB variation over that range. Floor reflections caused larger variations at lower frequencies, although the overall response was still within ± 6 dB from 50 Hz to 20 kHz.

The close-miked woofer response, combined with the port output and corrected for the relative dimensions of the cone and port, was within ± 2 dB from 50 to 300 Hz, sloping down 4 or 5 dB from 300 to 500 Hz, where it matched the average room-response level. The combined response of ± 3 dB from 45 Hz to 20 kHz is very good for a speaker of this size.

A quasi-anechoic MLS measurement confirmed the exceptional flatness of the B&W 2003's output. The response variation at a 2-meter distance was only ± 2.5 dB from 300 Hz to 20 kHz and was about half that much over most of the audio range.

Measurements with swept random noise gave similar results on-axis: ± 2 dB from 80 Hz to 20 kHz. At 45 degrees off-axis, the response remained within 3 dB of the on-axis level up to 6 kHz, dropping off by 7 dB at 10 kHz and 15 dB at 20 kHz. That is a slightly greater off-axis rolloff than we have measured from many speakers with similar driver complements, but our listening tests did not reveal any consequent loss of highs in music.

The system impedance reached its minimum of 4.7 ohms at 200 Hz and 8 kHz, confirming B&W's very conservative 4-ohm rating. There were

DIMENSIONS

8¼ INCHES WIDE, 16¼ INCHES HIGH,
9¼ INCHES DEEP

FINISH

BLACK WOODGRAIN

PRICE

\$399 A PAIR

MANUFACTURER

B&W LOUDSPEAKERS OF AMERICA, DEPT. SR,
P.O. BOX 8, NORTH READING, MA 01864-0008

impedance peaks of 25 ohms at 29 Hz and 20 ohms at 85 Hz and a maximum reading of 30 ohms at 1.8 kHz.

Sensitivity at 1 meter with a 2.83-volt input of pink noise was 90 dB sound-pressure level (SPL), slightly better than the rated 89 dB. The woofer distortion at that level (which corresponds roughly to a rather high listening volume) was typically 1 percent from 2 kHz down to 120 Hz, rising to 3 percent at 80 Hz and 10 percent at 60 Hz. In a pulse power test at 100 Hz, the Model 2003's small woofer began to sound hard at about 80 watts input and bottomed noisily at 110 watts. At higher frequencies the speaker easily absorbed single-cycle bursts of many hundreds of watts.

The crossover between the woofer and tweeter was undetectable by any measurement we could apply. Sometimes a phase anomaly at the crossover frequency can give a clue to the crossover point, but no such effect was apparent in our tests.

In view of B&W's emphasis on the Model 2003's lack of an external magnetic field, we checked it out with a magnetometer. The highest reading, directly at the woofer grille, was a mere 1 gauss. Holding the speaker directly against any portion of a TV set had no effect on the picture. Unshielded speakers often give considerably higher readings at distances of a foot or more and usually have to be kept at a distance from a TV to prevent color changes.

Listening to the B&W 2003 (before making any measurements) demonstrated that it had an uncolored, balanced sound. Its high end was obviously smooth and extended, without a trace of edginess. The speaker was refreshingly free from lower-midrange boom on male voices, yet it never seemed to be lacking in bass. Spatial imaging was first-rate, with a seamless soundstage that, together with the 2003's small size and unobtrusive appearance, made it easy to forget the presence of the speakers while listening to them. All in all, B&W has succeeded admirably in its goal of providing good sound from affordable, inconspicuous speakers while retaining full compatibility with the video elements of an A/V system. □

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Arms: 12.5 inches	Arms: 15.5 inches
Chest: 48.5 inches	Chest: 48.5 inches



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TEST REPORTS



Sony MDS-501 MiniDisc Recorder

KEN C. POHLMANN • HAMMER LABORATORIES

Audio product launches usually follow a strict evolutionary path. The first models are normally large and AC-powered; they're followed by smaller components, with battery-powered portables arriving last. This sequence follows the natural engineering progression, enabling companies to begin recouping their investments more quickly than they might otherwise.

Sony's MiniDisc launch has gone the opposite way. The first models were portables, followed by car and component models, with the largest version coming last. Although certainly costly for Sony, this inversion served to emphasize MD's strength as a portable format. Without the support of home decks, however, the format would be something of a two-legged stool. And, eventually, they came.

The MDS-501 is the first full-size home MD recorder (the earlier MDS-101 was a "midi"-size component). At first glance, it might be mistaken for a

CD player, but a closer look at its loading slot shows that no CD could ever enter there. Instead, either prerecorded or blank MD cartridges are loaded into the slot, much the way you'd insert a disc into a car CD player. An LED lights to show when a disc is loaded, and an eject button is used to retrieve discs. There is a power on/off button, but the deck will also turn on automatically when an MD is inserted.

Besides the usual transport controls, there is a small volume control that varies the output level of a nearby 1/4-inch headphone jack. An AMS

(Automatic Music Sensor) knob is used to cue to the beginning of a specific track, specify the order of programmed tracks, perform edit functions, enter text data, and set the clock. The AMS knob operates like a jog dial in that it is continuously variable without stops; in addition, it can be pressed to conveniently play or pause a disc. Incidentally, when you hit the play button, playback starts instantaneously, thanks to a memory-start function that keeps a small amount of data ready in memory so that the player doesn't have to wait for the disc.

A display button lets you see either the name of the current track or the time remaining on the disc. The display itself tells you everything you need to know about the MDS-501's operation. A music calendar indicates the track being played back, edited, or recorded. A surrounding grid also differentiates between prerecorded and user-recorded discs: It blanks when a recordable disc is played. An alphanumeric display shows disc and track titles, track numbers, total or elapsed playing time, date and time of a recording, and editing messages such as "Erase," "Divide," and "Combine," as well as diagnostic messages. A

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DESIGNS BY HENRY KLOSS



Powered Subwoofer



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The combination of the two speakers can reproduce a 30 Hz signal cleanly to a sound pressure level of over 100 dB in a 3,000 cubic foot room! That's enough clean, deep bass for the largest home theaters, and the most demanding listeners. The factory-direct price of the Slave Subwoofer is \$299.

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watt amplifier—all in a high-pressure black laminate cabinet. Its control panel includes a bass level control and an 18dB per octave, four-position electronic crossover frequency selector (to match the subwoofer to your other speakers).

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theaters! At the press event when we introduced our Powered Subwoofer, we had startled members of the audio and video press literally "jumping out of their seats" during demonstrations of movie soundtracks. The factory-direct price of the Powered Subwoofer is \$599.

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TEST REPORTS

peak-reading stereo bar-graph meter is used to monitor recording and playback levels.

Less frequently used controls are hidden behind a hinged door on the front panel's right side. These include buttons for editing operations, a button for selecting playback modes such as random and programmed play, high-speed search buttons, and a button for selecting A-B, track, or disc repeat. A knob is provided for setting input levels from analog sources; each channel can be adjusted separately. There are also switches for selecting either analog or digital inputs, setting recording or playback to be triggered by an external timer, and setting the internal clock's date and time.

Around back, the MDS-501 sports four phono jacks for analog line-level input and output and two Toslink optical connectors for digital audio input and output. The MDS-501 accommodates only the CD-standard 44.1-kHz sampling rate.

The RM-DIM infrared remote control supplied with the MDS-501 is a formidable handful of fifty-six buttons. Functions include transport control, power switching, text entry, direct track access (up to twenty-five tracks), track-sequence programming (also up to twenty-five tracks), random and repeat play, track intro-scan (6, 10, or 20 seconds), and 3-second auto-spacing between tracks—useful when recording tapes from an MD so that cassette-deck track-search features can be used reliably with them. The remote can also be used to synchronize a Sony CD player with the MDS-501 for making recordings. Curiously, the remote does not let you manipulate any of the MDS-501's editing features; perhaps Sony is afraid of accidental button-pushing.

Operation of the MDS-501 is fairly straightforward. Playback works much as with a CD player, except that disc and track titles are displayed. Specific tracks can be cued by pressing direct-track-access or forward/reverse scan buttons on the remote or by twisting the front-panel AMS dial right or left. Other functions, such as random track playback and track-sequence programming, are also easily accomplished.



MEASUREMENTS

Recording and playback measurements were made through the analog inputs; measurements given are for the worse of the two channels. The review sample was a hand-built prototype and may differ slightly from final production units. In particular, Sony says that production units will exhibit at least 5 dB better signal-to-noise ratio.

Line input for indicated 0 dB 800 mV
Line output for indicated 0 dB 2.08 volts

PLAYBACK

Frequency response
 20 Hz to 20 kHz +0.02, -0.05 dB
Channel separation
 1 kHz 68.4 dB
 20 kHz 67.8 dB
Signal-to-noise ratio (A-wtd.) 90.5 dB
Dynamic range 87.2 dB
Distortion (THD+N at 1 kHz)
 at 0 dB 0.008%
 at -20 dB 0.049%
Linearity error (at -90 dB) -0.6 dB
Interchannel phase shift (at 20 kHz) 0.9°

RECORD/PLAYBACK

Frequency response
 20 Hz to 20 kHz +0.02, -0.11 dB
Channel separation
 1 kHz 52.6 dB
 20 kHz 52.0 dB
Signal-to-noise ratio (A-wtd.) 86.3 dB
Dynamic range 82.5 dB
Distortion (THD+N at 1 kHz)
 at 0 dB 0.01%
 at -20 dB 0.21%
Linearity error (at -90 dB) -40.3 dB
Interchannel phase shift (at 20 kHz) 1.5°

What clearly differentiates the operation of the MDS-501 from that of a CD player, however, is its recording function. It is especially important to note that the MDS-501 has two recording modes. In the ALL REC ON mode, it automatically erases the entire recorded contents of the inserted MD. If you want to keep the existing contents of an MD and add new data, you must set the recording mode to ALL REC OFF before you load the disc. Like all other consumer digital audio recorders, the MDS-501 incorporates the Serial Copy Management System (SCMS) and will therefore refuse to make a direct digital copy of a source that is itself a direct digital copy of an original.

Recording itself is pretty easy. You simply select analog or digital input and press the record and play buttons simultaneously. The deck automatically locates blank portions on the disc to accommodate the new data, or it erases the existing data, depending on the recording mode. In either mode, the deck displays the time remaining on the disc. Level-setting is unnecessary in direct-digital recording (as from the digital output of a CD player to the MDS-501's digital input), but when recording from the analog inputs you must adjust levels manually. In either case, track numbers can be marked automatically or manually.

Changes made to an MD through recording are finalized only when you update the disc's table of contents (TOC) by ejecting it or hitting the power switch to go to standby mode. Like cassettes and floppy disks, MD's have a record-protect tab to prevent accidental erasure.

The edit buttons and AMS dial enable you to select a number of special features. When turned on, the Level Sync function automatically marks a new track whenever a silence occurs (new tracks are always automatically marked when recording digitally from a CD), or you can manually add track numbers by pressing the record button while recording. The Divide function lets you split an existing track into two or more tracks and automatically rennumbers succeeding tracks up to a maximum of 255 (a track must be at

Home Theater Speaker Systems. There's A Right Way And A Wrong Way.

We'd like to clear up some misconceptions on the subject of speaker systems for use in Dolby Pro Logic home theater systems.

Misconception #1: You can use any speakers for the surround and center channels.

The center channel is very important because a large portion of soundtracks is directed to the center in systems with Pro Logic. That speaker should have smooth frequency response, good power handling, and it must match the tonal balance of the main speakers. Also, a center channel speaker should be magnetically shielded to prevent video interference.

Surround speakers should also match the tonal balance of the front speakers. Indeed, all five speakers should have matching tonal balances for proper sound. But unlike front speakers, surround speakers should create a diffuse sound field. So the best systems with Pro Logic use "dipole radiating" surround speakers (e.g. *The Surround II* and *The Surround* packages).

All the systems on this page consist of speakers designed to match each other tonally. (Identical timbre).

Misconception #2: Use five identical speakers in a system with Pro Logic.

A number of companies have released speaker packages consisting of five matching mini-speakers (some with a subwoofer). This ignores the fact that the surround channels serve different purposes than the front channels.

Misconception #3: A good home theater speaker system costs thousands and thousands of dollars.

A number of retailers regularly sell \$10,000 Pro Logic speaker systems. This is just not necessary.

We believe that the two more expensive systems on this page compete head-on with combinations selling for thousands more. Add our Powered Subwoofer (\$599), and we'll compare them to anything on the market.



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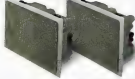
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TEST REPORTS

least 8 seconds long to be counted). Or you can go in reverse with the Combine function, putting two or more sequential tracks together into one and renumbering the succeeding tracks accordingly.

A Rehearsal mode enables you to audition an edit point before committing to it, and in the process to vary that point over a range of -128 to +127 steps of 0.06 second each. You can also change the numerical order of the tracks on a disc and erase a whole disc, a track, or part of a track. All of these editing tasks are fast and easy to perform, in part because they require no physical alteration of the data on a disc. All that gets changed is the MD's table of contents, which is what tells the player where everything is located on the disc, and no edit is final until the TOC is rewritten with your changes.

After dividing and conquering your tracks, you'll want to label them. The MDS-501 enables you to create disc and track titles of as many as 100 capital and lower-case letters, numbers, and symbols, to a maximum of 1,700 characters per disc. The labeling is easily accomplished using either the front-panel AMS dial or the remote control's keypad to select characters.

Like other MD components, the MDS-501 uses Sony's ATRAC perceptual-coding system to reduce the amount of data that must be recorded on the disc by about 80 percent (currently the only practical method of squeezing CD-length recordings into such a small package). Traditional measurements are still useful for diagnosing gross performance problems in MD decks, but perceptual coding shifts more of the burden onto listening tests. I was therefore especially careful in my auditioning of the MDS-501, using a variety of prerecorded MD's and both 60- and 74-minute recordings made on our test sample.

In direct comparison with my reference CD player, the MDS-501 sounded subtly but distinctively different. There is no mistaking the MD sound: It creeps out just like Dan Rather's suppressed Texas drawl. Although the sonic artifacts were perhaps slightly less obvious than with previous MD

decks, they were still clearly present. Bench tests indicated that the MDS-501's ATRAC encoder does operate a little differently in some respects from the one used in earlier MiniDisc recorders, particularly at very high frequencies, but just as no amount of speech coaching could ever relieve Mr. Rather of his accent, perhaps MD will always have a slight twang to the trained ear.

The principal ATRAC artifacts are a watery, slightly unstable shifting in the tonal characteristics and imaging of middle frequencies and a smearing of high frequencies and transients. For example, cymbals sometimes sound slightly odd in an MD recording. To put this into perspective, the artifacts are fairly subtle and have been completely inaudible to about half the people I've put through double-blind comparisons. Given that MD was never meant to compete with CD on sound quality, but instead to make some of the benefits of CD more portable, you might not consider the format's sonic shortcomings very important. In other words, if you'll be using the MDS-501 primarily to make recordings for portable listening, you probably won't care much about ATRAC's relatively minor flaws.

After listening for ATRAC artifacts, I turned my ear to other, more mundane considerations, such as noise, distortion, and so forth. I did

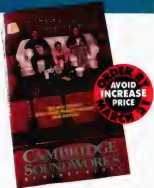
not hear any outstanding problems, and in general the MDS-501's basic electronic performance seemed on a par with that of previous MD recorders, or similar to that of a good portable CD player. Subsequent bench measurements essentially confirmed that judgment. My final test (a favorite here at Hammer Laboratories) was a good fist-slammng into the top and sides of the recorder, which demonstrated that the MDS-501 was completely resistant to vibration.

Operationally, the MDS-501 was great. If you are into editing, you'll love the flexibility afforded by the combination of disc recording and a long playback memory buffer. You can cobble together pieces from all over the disc and still have the result play back continuously. Other features also worked well. I especially liked the AMS jog wheel and the way it lets you quickly select tracks. This is an absolutely terrific feature, and I hope it eventually shows up on CD players.

The MDS-501 will encourage your secret recording-engineer persona to emerge from hiding, indulging itself in elaborate editing projects that would be all but impossible on non-professional tape equipment. But even if you just want to record MD's for portable listening or to enjoy noncritical listening at home, the MDS-501 is ready to accommodate you. □



"Honey, it's Mr. Mamouliau. He wants to know if he can sit on your subwoofer—his chiropractor says it's good for his prostate."



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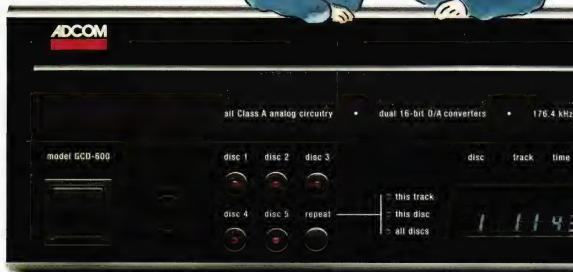
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HOW TO MAKE

Like most folks these days, I've rediscovered my long-standing affection for dinosaurs. Not the kind seen in *Jurassic Park*, but rather those found in my private collec-

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HOME RECORDING

tion of fossils: authentic "Stop Reagan in '80" and "Crazy Eddie" T-shirts, a circa-1986 ITT Xtra personal computer with 256K memory, and approximately 2,200 LP's.

Now, some "audio archaeologists" suggest that the launches of the Sony-developed Mini-Disc (MD) and Philips's Digital Compact

Cassette (DCC) place the analog compact cassette next in line for the bone heap. But I think that's rushing things a bit. Although some digital format will certainly be the future of audio recording, I've yet to be convinced that the analog cassette is in imminent danger of extinction.

In fact, according to the International Tape and Disc Association, the audio cassette has at least another ten years of steady, if slowing, growth ahead. The obvious reason is that the cassette is pretty convenient—unlike the LP, which was strictly an in-home medium and thus easily supplanted by the superior-sounding and far more convenient CD. And, of course, cassettes are everywhere! In the

BY STEVE SCHWARTZ

SONY/PHILIPS DIGITAL



GOOD TAPES



home, in the car, on the train, on the beach, in offices, schools . . . well, you get the picture.

Moreover, when you consider that an estimated 4.4 billion blank cassettes have been sold in the U.S. since 1980—with an additional 450 million expected to be sold this year—there's little doubt that both MD and DCC have an extremely tough act to follow. Making matters even tougher is that the two digital technologies have to

compete (see the table below, "How the Recording Formats Stack Up"). I don't know about you, but my bank book is urging me to sit this one out, at least until a winner nears the gate. Besides, I'm pretty satisfied right now with the performance of my homemade tapes. Indeed, I actually like the analog cassette. I like its universality and its technical challenges. It's a creative medium—a magnetic canvas of sorts on which I try to

capture my individual musical preferences.

A Sound Checklist

The way I see it, anyone who makes a habit of taping a CD or LP (other than a collector's item) from start to finish is a total wuss. I mean, why bother? If I want to listen to the Stones' "Some Girls," I'll put on the CD. But I have only one recording that contains the songs *King Bee*,

HOW THE RECORDING FORMATS STACK UP

	DAT	DCC	MINIDISC	ANALOG CASSETTE
RECORDING METHOD	Linear PCM	PCM with PASC data reduction	PCM with ATRAC data reduction	Analog
SAMPLING RATE	48, 44.1, or 32 kHz	48, 44.1, or 32 kHz	44.1 kHz	Not applicable
MAXIMUM RECORDING TIME	120 minutes at highest sampling rate	45 to 60 minutes in each direction (about 90 to 120 minutes total) at highest sampling rate	74 minutes	Typically 45 to 50 minutes in each direction (90 to 100 minutes total); about 60 minutes in each direction (120 minutes total) with thinnest tape
DYNAMIC RANGE	Approximately 90 dB	Approximately 90 dB	Approximately 90 dB	55 to 80 dB
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	Essentially flat to 20 kHz at 48- and 44.1-kHz sampling rates, to 14 kHz at 32-kHz sampling rate	Essentially flat to 20 kHz at 48- and 44.1-kHz sampling rates, to 14 kHz at 32-kHz sampling rate	Essentially flat to 20 kHz	Depends on tape, adjustment of deck, and other factors, but typically within ± 3 dB from 30 Hz to 18 kHz with good equipment
CHANNEL SEPARATION	Typically 90 dB or more, limited only by analog electronics	Typically 90 dB or more, limited only by analog electronics	Typically 90 dB or more, limited only by analog electronics	Typically 40 to 50 dB at low frequencies
DISTORTION	Extremely low	Extremely low in conventional measurements	Extremely low in conventional measurements	Typically low (less than 0.5 percent at normal recording levels) but can reach several percent on peaks
WOW AND FLUTTER	Unmeasurable	Unmeasurable	Unmeasurable	Typically between ± 0.05 and ± 0.15 percent on good decks
INPUT/OUTPUT	Analog or digital	Analog or digital	Analog or digital	Analog
VIBRATION SENSITIVITY	Low to very low	Low to very low	Low to very low	Moderate to very low
DURABILITY	Good	Good to very good	Excellent	Good to very good
OVERALL REPRODUCTION ACCURACY	Excellent	Excellent	Very good to excellent	Fair to excellent

Parachute Woman, and *You Got the Silver*, and that's my own Stones anthology, a tape I call "Time Warp." The same applies to my other one-of-a-kind collections by such artists as Ray Charles, Steely Dan, Hank Williams, and Howling Wolf—not to mention such genre compilations as "All That Bebop," "Going for Baroque," and "Hoedown in Motown."

Catchy compilation titles aside, most homemade tapes only sound as good as the hardware used to record them. It therefore stands to reason that a serious home recordist should have a somewhat serious tape deck, preferably one equipped with as many of the following features as possible:

- A three-head (playback/record/erase) configuration for better sonic performance and to enable off-the-tape monitoring while recording.
- A well-constructed tape transport with at least two motors (two per well in a dubbing deck).
- Some means, automatic or manual, of adjusting the recording bias.
- Dolby B and C noise reduction and Dolby HX Pro. Very serious home recordists may wish to consider the new Dolby S noise reduction. More on Dolby later.
- A readable peak-level meter.
- A real-time tape counter—as opposed to the typical numeric counter



Denon's DRW-840 dubbing deck (\$400) has two heads in each well and features Dolby HX Pro, Dolby B and C noise reduction, an output-level indicator for each channel, a high-speed dubbing mode, a relay mode that automatically switches from Deck A to Deck B during recording or playback, and controls for music search and bias adjustment.

blank cassette should be as agonizing as shopping for a new car. Although I make it a rule to steer clear of private brands and no-label stock—out of respect for my equipment and to safeguard against oxide shedding—I'm satisfied with most major-brand chrome-type tapes (Type II or high-bias tapes). I've used standard ferric-oxide tapes (Type I, or normal bias) in a pinch, but never without noise reduction to compensate for the higher tape hiss.

While I sometimes buy metal tapes (Type IV) on sale, I don't believe that metal's advantages over Type II—superior high-frequency response and

signal-retention characteristics, which can yield better dubs from CD's—are always worth the added expense, especially if the deck I'm using incorporates Dolby HX Pro.

Longer-length tapes (74 or 100 minutes instead of 60 or 90 minutes) are a different story. True, we're only talking about an extra 7 minutes a side at most, but the added cost is often negligible while the extra recording/playback time is always useful. The only problem I've had with longer-length tapes is the lack of appropriate settings on my recorder's real-time counter.

That's no big deal: I simply set the



Both of the two-head wells in Teac's W-6000R (\$750) are said to deliver swift autorverse operation thanks to the use of an infrared device that senses the tape leader. Features include Dolby HX Pro, Dolby B and C noise reduction, a pitch control in Deck I, manual and automatic recording-level adjustment, automatic fading, mic/line/tape mixing, and a remote control.

(a must-have for measuring remaining or elapsed tape time).

Generally speaking, dubbing decks sacrifice some sound quality or recording flexibility for their dual-well convenience (few are three-head units). Dolby B noise reduction (for both playback and recording) is an absolute must in this case—as are rugged tape transports and Dolby HX Pro.

Tale of the Tape

Despite the absurd variety of tape lengths and formulations available nowadays, I don't believe choosing a



Sony's TC-K611S (\$400) is one of the least expensive decks to offer all three types of Dolby noise reduction: B, C, and S. The three-head deck also features a powered loading mechanism, Dolby HX Pro, a linear tape counter with memory, and music-search and record-mute controls.

deck for the closest tape length. When the remaining-tape indicator starts running low, I reset the counter to 0:00, fast forward to the end, and note the timer reading. That gives me a fairly precise indication of how much recording time actually remains on the side. Ideally, I like to stop with approximately 8 minutes remaining in order to plan my last few selections accordingly. Since I detest tapes with prolonged silences at the ends, I'll often regard the last track on each side as a "bonus cut," selected for its artistic merits and its fit.

I'm also a firm believer in combining selections from CD's and LP's (and on rare occasions, other cassettes) to produce a tape anthology: The more you have to work with, the more diverse and interesting your tapes will be. But this approach also requires frequent compensation for fluctuations in the sound quality and, especially, volume level of the source material.

Depending on the degree of compression of the source signals, music that produces the same peak levels on the meters may not *sound* equally loud. In such situations, I usually "re-hearse record" about 30 seconds of the selected track, then compare its playback level by ear to that of the preceding cut—ignoring the level meters—before making any needed adjustments in the recording level. This essential but delicate procedure should be handled with some finesse, since too many level changes may result in a tape with more peaks and dips than the Himalayas.

More often than not, I opt to record slightly on the "hot" side, which is to say that most clean analog material (except chamber music) will produce



Harman Kardon's TD-4400 (\$449) is a two-head deck featuring separate motors for the tape reels and capstan, Dolby HX Pro, Dolby B and C noise reduction, peak-level meters, a bias fine-tune control, a linear time counter, programmable music search, and an intro-scan mode that plays 15-second samples of every song on a cassette.

occasional peaks of +1 dB to +2 dB. There's typically no added distortion, and I like the extra punch when I'm listening to the tape on a portable or car stereo. Some decks may even allow higher peaks.

Variations in sound quality are rarely a problem when recording from CD's, but they can be a real pain with LP's, especially older ones. Sadly, there's not an awful lot you can do about them short of editing out (recording over) unwanted surface noise in the beginning and end grooves, careful—and quick—twists of the recording-level knob, or jabs at the pause control.

Dolby B or Not Dolby B

Home recordists—and even some professional ones—are often confused about the multitude of Dolby-trademarked switches on a cassette deck: Dolby B, Dolby C, Dolby HX Pro, and sometimes Dolby S.

To begin with, none of these systems has anything to do with surround sound or movie playback—that's a whole other set of Dolby systems.

Dolby B, C, and S are all encode-decode noise-reduction systems that operate by selectively boosting low-level, high-frequency signals (approximately over the same frequency range where most tape hiss occurs) during recording. On playback, these signals are scaled down to their proper levels, prompting an equal reduction in the hiss behind them. The three systems differ in their ability to do this, with Dolby B providing the least noise reduction and Dolby S the most.

The trick is in that "encode-decode" business. In order to obtain any noise reduction, a tape recorded with Dolby B encoding should be played back on a machine having its Dolby B decoder switched on. Likewise with Dolby C and S. Dolby B-encoded tapes are listenable, but not very hi-fi, when played back without any decoding at all (say, on a cheapo headphone portable). Some people even prefer undecoded playback on portable and car systems for its boosted highs. Similarly, Dolby S tapes can be played back with listenable results using only Dolby B decoding. If you think that Dolby C has been left out of this quasi-compatibility arrangement, you're right. Dolby C in, Dolby C out, or you may as well forget it.

My advice: If you have it, use Dolby S. If you don't ever expect your tapes to be played on equipment that lacks Dolby C, use Dolby C. Unless you don't mind tape hiss, use Dolby B in the absence of anything better.

Biased Opinions

Regardless of whether you use noise reduction or not, setting the proper recording bias for the tape should be a standard procedure. An ultrasonic signal applied to the tape along with the audio, bias acts as a



The Technics RS-TR777 (\$300) combines a playback-only deck with a two-head recording deck.

It features Dolby HX Pro, Dolby B and C noise reduction, a 45-second fast-wind time for C-60 cassettes, powered loading mechanisms, manual bias adjustment, and an automatic setup mode that adjusts bias, equalization, and recording level for optimal performance with the tape used.



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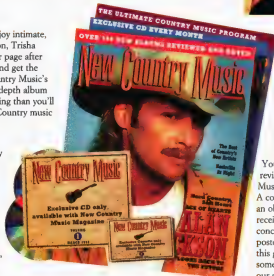
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NEED TO KNOW

HOME TAPING TIPS

For a sonically successful compilation tape you have to:

- **Know your music.** Music that has little dynamic variation (including, unfortunately, much pop and rock) can stand higher background noise levels than very dynamic music (like most classical music and jazz). If the music has restricted dynamics, you can often get away with using a less expensive tape type as long as your deck has Dolby HX Pro.

- **Know your tape.** Select your tape with an eye toward the expected playback system. Some very cheap players don't have a normal/chrome (metal) switch. Normal (Type I) tape is universal, like a universal blood donor.

- **Know your meters.** Experiment with the kind of music you typically record by making a tape with the meters peaking at various levels. Don't be afraid to go above the "0" mark occasionally, even often. Learn how high you can let your meters ride without hearing the effects of tape saturation: loss of the very highest frequencies, high distortion, a hard, "compressed" sound. A three-head deck makes this learning process very easy.

- **Know your deck's transport controls.** Most tape-recorder pause controls neither start nor stop on a dime (usually it's more like a quarter or half-dollar). Tight "seques" between selections require allowance for operation of the pause control.

In taping vinyl, you'll get smoother transitions if you start the deck in record, put it in pause, start the disc on a lead-in groove, and then release the deck from pause. —David Ransda

"magnetic matchmaker" in that it is responsible for arranging the optimal union of the audio signal with the tape's magnetic layer. The amount of bias signal you use influences nearly all important aspects of a tape's sound quality, including distortion, frequency response, output level, and background noise.

While most home decks adjust their bias settings automatically by detecting the different holes on the back edge of each cassette, the better decks also provide a way to fine-tune the bias level in order to match the individual characteristics of each tape more closely. Carefully follow the deck manufacturer's recommendations for using a bias fine-tuning feature. In some decks, the process is automated, saving you a great deal of trouble.

Dolby HX Pro further extends the high-frequency range over which high-

to accurately label your finished tapes and the insert cards in their cases as soon as you pop one out of the machine.

Don't neglect essential hardware maintenance. Clean your deck's heads, capstans, and pinch-rollers—either with a commercial cassette-deck cleaning system or with a little isopropyl alcohol on a cotton swab—after every 10 to 20 hours of use. A head demagnetizer is also a wise investment and should be deployed after every 40 or so hours of use. (You don't really need to demagnetize a two-head deck if you use it to record every now and then, but it won't hurt either.)

That's about it in terms of applied technology. But the true secret of making a first-rate tape compilation is to follow your tastes and sensibilities—which essentially boils down to making a prime selection of material



Part of Onkyo's Integra line, the TA-207 deck (\$530) features three heads, three motors, a closed-loop dual-capstan transport, Dolby HX Pro, Dolby B and C noise reduction, a real-time tape counter, CD synchro start with a compatible CD player, auto-space and record-mute controls, a peak-hold fluorescent display, and a remote control.

level signals can be recorded by dynamically varying the bias level according to the level of high frequencies in the music. HX Pro is a recording-only process and usually cannot be turned off. It can be used in conjunction with any noise-reduction system or none at all. It is a very desirable feature for a cassette deck because you may be able to get away with a less expensive grade of tape while maintaining high-frequency performance.

Taking Care

A pair of headphones can be indispensable for monitoring the progress of your recordings. You'll hear all the nitty grit between cuts (how about that for an obscure 1970's allusion?). Also, neatness counts, so don't forget

and maintaining smooth (musically appropriate) transitions between songs. Knowledge of and practice with your deck's pause control is essential (see "Need to Know" at left for more tips), but you don't necessarily need to leave the several seconds of silence required for most automatic music-sensing systems.

Admittedly, most, if not all, of the rituals described above will be a thing of the past once the age of digital home recording arrives in full. But until then, it may be worth rattling a few bones to prolong the life of your treasured dinosaurs. □

Steve Schwartz is a New York City-based free-lance writer whose neighbors wish he would find a quieter pastime.



Odd as it may seem, most speaker companies don't make their own drivers, the fundamental components that produce the sound. Instead, they assemble their systems using other peoples' parts. Then, they try to compensate for the inevitable deficiencies and mis-matches.

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TRADE SECRETS

10 ways you can use retail tricks of the trade to make your shopping productive and hassle-free

 Audio technology has come a long way since Thomas Edison fooled that dog of his.

Yet it could be argued that the most profound transformation in recent years has not been in the equipment, but in how it is sold. With audio systems of one sort or another in an estimated 94 percent of American homes, hi-fi specialty shops have branched out into video and associated electronics. Mass merchandisers and discounters, meanwhile, in their wars on each other and any other dealers who might get in the way, have relegated audio hardware to the status of toaster ovens.

Entirely new ways of buying have surfaced: home shopping on cable, infomercials, and computer online services. Mail order is bigger than ever. Futurists like Jim Snider and Faith Popcorn project us into a world where product information will be readily available via modem and retail stores will be part circus to attract traffic. They tell us stores will be museums where people go to look at the equipment, then go home to buy it. Even now, mass merchants often display audio equipment without thought to

hook-up or demonstration, giving shoppers little opportunity to compare operation or performance.

With such pressures on traditional retail establishments, it's surprising that their customer/salesperson relations tend to be spotty, at best. The skills and experience of audio floor-sales personnel span a wide range: You may encounter a talented, qualified, and knowledgeable person, or you may not. Retailers commit varying amounts of time and energy to customer service and employee product training. Although all will profess to high standards in these areas, their success in maintaining those standards also varies, and complete quality control of every customer encounter is impossible. All too often, mass merchandisers let their policies do the selling, demoting their salespeople to clerks.

In defense of audio salespeople, it should be said that their errors are mostly errors of omission—failure to provide adequate information or guidance rather than any attempt to actually cheat the customer. Either way, however, you need to be prepared to look out for yourself.

BY MARK ELSON

1 Set a budget, but be open-minded about it.

"How much do you want to spend?" may be a difficult question to answer right off the bat, especially if you don't know which features are available at which prices. Remember, though, that you generally get what you pay for—deals that seem too good to be true usually are. You should also be aware that there is usually a point of diminishing returns in what you pay for audio equipment. Beyond that point, prices often climb at a rate disproportionate to improvements in performance or features. You will pay a premium for the newest technology, too. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be the first on your block to own the latest, but don't let yourself get railroaded into buying way beyond your foreseeable needs. The best approach is to be cautiously open-minded. It may be wise, for example, to spend a few dollars more than you originally intended in order to smooth the path to future enhancements, such as a subwoofer or a multiroom system.

2 Educate yourself and ask questions.

Read the articles and reviews, look around, get the buzz, ask your friends, elicit opinions—then make up your own mind. Unprepared salespeople fear well-informed customers. Talented salespeople, on the other hand, know that these customers are usually serious, ready-to-buy shoppers and will respond appropriately. Beware of being immediately shoved in front of "the best unit we've got." If you don't understand certain technologies or features, ask, and insist on a good answer. You're entitled to know what an S-video terminal is used for, or what "eight-times-oversampling" or "magnetically shielded" means if it's being used as a selling point.

3 Be prepared to "qualify" yourself.

"Qualifying the customer" is sales jargon for the process of determining what you need, want, and can afford. In this critical initial stage, the salesperson should be getting to know you, asking a series of questions to home

in on the products best suited to your particular requirements. Unfortunately, few of today's salespeople take the time to qualify their customers effectively. Some major retailers have a "3-minute rule": If a sale doesn't appear imminent by the end of that time, the employee is supposed to move on to other prospective buyers. A quick sales pitch, and they're off to someone else. Ironically, failure to qualify customers adequately is one of the main reasons these same retailers tend to suffer high return rates. Go figure.

One of the best ways you can help a salesperson help you is to give the answers, even when you have not been asked the questions. Have a sketch of your room, with cabinet dimensions if applicable. Measure the distance from the seating area to where the speakers (and, in a home theater, TV) will be placed. Know the room's acoustic properties. Be prepared to indicate your listening habits: types of music, how loud, amount of use, who will be operating the equipment, plans for future growth—in short, how you envision living with your system.

4 Get your hands on the equipment.

One of the big advantages of buying from a retail store is that you can actually see and touch the gear before you buy it. If you walk into a store to make a purchase, only to be told, "Please, don't touch that," walk out. An alert salesperson would say, "Let me show you how to work that." If you don't hear that, ask to be shown how to operate the piece, especially the remote control if there is one. Make sure you're comfortable with the design and understand the buttons and functions. Even if there is no separate sound room, insist on hearing the equipment. If it's not hooked up, don't settle for "Just read the instructions." Look at the back panel and make sure you understand the connections. By operating the equipment you'll have a much better basis for comparing various models.

5 Scope out the service and return situation.

Although most mainstream audio manufacturers have very high standards, no assembly line has a zero de-

fect rate, even with the tightest quality control. You can find someone who has had a bad experience with just about any brand. But some manufacturers are better known than others for reliability and ease of service. Do a little unconventional reconnaissance: Call or visit some large repair facilities. A cooperative technician will often be able to tell you which brands and models his shop encounters on a regular basis. Try to gather information from several sources. Reputable retailers will always stand behind their merchandise, but dealing with defective equipment is still a headache and an inconvenience. Why should you be among the random casualties of lemonitis if you can help it? And just in case you do have a problem, find out what the store's service policy is before you buy. Will it take a faulty product back, or is it up to you to deal with the situation?

6 Keep an eye on value.

Since overstock and year-end close-outs from manufacturers are rare, when you run across a legitimate one, consider it carefully. Close-outs are a good opportunity to spend less than you originally planned or to acquire a higher-caliber piece than you could otherwise afford. It is a myth that products get discontinued because they are defective. No maker can afford to dump products on the market that will ultimately boomerang back for service.

Value-conscious shoppers may also find good hunting among demonstration units or open stock (returns). Reputable dealers will not repack such merchandise and represent it as new. (Nevertheless, inspect the cartons before you take them home—repacks can happen, even by accident.) But bear in mind that demo units can be abused, especially in mass-merchant displays where there is little or no traffic control. Returns can actually be a safer value. A component may have been returned because the customer was not properly qualified. Or perhaps the equipment was bought with the intention of taking advantage of a retailer's liberal return policy. Monday morning, after the weekend parties, returns start piling up. Dealers plagued by such returns regularly discount them in order to resell them. You will probably never know the real history of a returned

component. If the box and packing look good, with all the accessories and manuals, and the unit itself appears in good shape, chances are that you've got a bargain—provided, of course, the price is right.

Watch out for "guaranteed lowest prices."

Despite surveys claiming that consumers are less concerned with price than with quality, service, and selection, price is the dominant theme in today's economy. Mass merchandisers shop each other relentlessly, invading competitors' stores, secretly reciting brands, models, and prices into palm-held mini-recorders. Ironically, these efforts are not intended for what you'd expect: bragging rights about having the lowest prices. The *real* reason is to discover where they can raise prices. Example: If Dealer A has a receiver for \$295, Dealer B is losing profit by tagging it at \$265. Discovering this, Dealer B would adjust his price upward to just slightly below Dealer A's price, maybe \$289.

Another factor in pricing is the wholesale cost to the dealer. Volume buys and first offers of close-outs are sometimes awarded to "key" dealers. Yet manufacturers with large market shares have a vested interest in maintaining equal footing for all their dealers. And a savvy dealer will pull items off the shelf, into the back room, before being embarrassed by price. What all this adds up to is that prices will tend not to vary dramatically among competing dealers in any particular region. That's not to say that you'll never find any real bargains, but devoting a lot of time to shopping solely for price may not be a very productive strategy.

Be wary of Incredible "loss leaders."

Loss leaders are items selected, sometimes with manufacturers' blessings, to show dramatic price reductions and to be advertised as "just one example of the savings you'll find every day at Larry's Stereo Land." Quantities are usually limited to a handful, sometimes demos only. Loss leaders can be legitimate values, depending on the dealer's ethics, but if you see something you want, you may have to move fast. Common practice, howev-

er, especially among the mass merchandisers, is to use loss leaders to attract you into the store, where the salesperson is "encouraged" to sell you something more profitable. "Bait and switch" is illegal, and the advertised merchandise must be offered for sale. But with subtle facial and vocal expressions, the salesperson may convey the message that Brand X on sale is not such a hot deal, which it often isn't.

Whether any aspect of this type of advertising and selling involves actual deception is perhaps open to debate; the important thing is to understand it and to prepare yourself accordingly. If you go to a store in response to one of these special deals, don't let yourself be steered away from it without evaluating the product first. On the other hand, don't insist on buying something just because the price seems wonderful. Price and product *both* need to be right for you, and only you can be the final judge of that.

Get out and shop around.

Most dealers try to pre-empt your shopping. The common sentiment in the industry is that there is no such thing as a "be-back"—unless the sale is closed immediately, the customer will fall into the clutches of an evil high-pressure competitor and never be seen again. Many retailers feel they must resort to pressure tactics, which, of course, chase most people away, accomplishing the very thing they set out to prevent. Some even claim to have done your shopping for you. You may be shown a computer screen or printout that has prices for all the major dealers in the area—a very powerful and persuasive sales tool. Unfortunately, because prices can fluctuate daily, these lists are just too cumbersome to maintain accurately.

Shopping several dealers can uncover unexpected values. With more information, you'll have a basis of comparison for identifying bona fide bargains when you run across them. Some manufacturers provide a discountable, "private" line of goods to certain dealers. The model numbers may be slightly different from those in the regular line, the cabinet colors may be different, but the basic products are often identical or close.

Another great reason to shop is to compare dealers and their sales personnel. You can then compare not

only prices but also the quality of service. All else being equal, the hardest-working salesperson deserves your business. In the event of a problem or questions, he's the one most likely to go the extra mile for you.

If you're not sure, don't buy it. If it's not right for you, don't keep it.

We've all heard, "If you don't like it, you can always bring it back." Liberal return policies are obviously a benefit to the shopper. Certainly any good dealer would rather give a refund than create bad will. In unskilled hands, however, a liberal return policy is all too often used as a "desperation close," encouraging the purchase of an inappropriate item that may not stay sold. One of the most effective ways for a salesperson to insure your satisfaction and limit returns is to make certain of a proper match between you and the equipment. That is done by determining your needs at the outset—that is, by qualifying you. In the short-term drive for daily business, many retailers forget that the objective is for merchandise to *stay* sold.

Other dealers remember all too well, in ways that you may not like. To keep a lid on the nightmare of returned merchandise, discount and warehouse clubs often have strict return policies. Be careful. You may pay a price for the "deal of the century."

Let's face it, it's a pain to return something. Your best defense is to make sure you've selected the right equipment in the first place. Salespeople are invariably taught about "overcoming objections" as a sales-closing skill. If you balk at buying, they are supposed to find out why and attempt to counter your reason. On the surface that seems a reasonable approach. In practice, however, it's often used as a poor substitute for properly qualifying customers—too little caring too late. This is usually the point where you'll feel pressured to buy. If you *aren't* ready to buy, just say so. Don't let anyone "hard-close" you. Buy when you're ready and only what you really want. You, and probably even the dealer, will be happier in the long run.

Mark Elson is a management and sales-training consultant in the retail electronics industry.

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RICHARD THOMPSON

BY BRETT MILANO



"It's nice when people like your music, but that doesn't mean everybody has to."

et's get one thing straight: despite his reputation as a gloom-monger, Richard Thompson does not write depressing songs. Dark, obsessive, lovelorn songs where betrayal, damage, or death is always a distinct possibility? Sure. But who said that had to be depressing?

"Truly happy music just isn't very interesting," Thompson told me by phone from England. "The best popular music is always about sad stuff, or serious, violent, or dangerous stuff. People like songs like *Tom Dooley*—'Hang down your head, you killed that girl, you're going to die.' Or the Everly Brothers—'So sad to watch good love go bad.' That's the *good* stuff, and I'm really just doing the same thing. When you're writing a song, you have to write about people in an immediate way, because you don't have a lot of time. So sometimes you have to write about extreme people, or ordinary people in extreme circumstances.

"I don't try to be negative," he continued. "I like to think that in songs where people die, at least they're going to a better place. I do write sad songs sometimes, and I try to write real songs. But I don't think I've ever written a pessimistic song."

Hold on a second. What about the notorious *End of the Rainbow* (from 1973's "I Want to See the Bright Lights Tonight" with Thompson's then-wife Linda), which advises a newborn child that "There's nothing at the end of the rainbow / There's nothing to grow up for anymore"?

"Well, maybe that one," he conceded. "I still enjoy it as a song, though. Sometimes you have to push it, you have to go that far out in order to come back again."

Thompson's just-released album, "Mirror Blue" (Capitol), may not change his status as a beloved cult figure, but it will keep fans scratching their heads over why he's not more popular. Though not as hard-rocking as 1991's "Rumour and Sigh," it consolidates that album's move to accessibility, a trend that began when Thompson linked up with L.A. producer Mitchell Froom (Los Lobos, Crowded House). The songs feel more hopeful than they did at the time of his breakup with Linda (which produced one of rock's great catharsis albums, 1982's "Shoot Out the Lights"). And the music is more free-wheeling, with jazz, country, and catchy pop/rock tunes, plus a saloon

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

ballad that sounds tailor-made for labelmate Frank Sinatra. English folk music is in there too, as it's been since Thompson's late-Sixties days as a member of Fairport Convention.

His real roots, however, go back to the Jerry Lee Lewis and Everly Brothers records that he wore out as a teenager. "I suppose I like the periods of music where there's real energy and freshness, and you get that when worlds collide," he said. "When you get Southern white boys trying to play the blues and it comes out as something new, and you can hear the excitement on the records. Or the early jazz things, where people were doing really innovative things. I find I have to remind myself of what the exciting things are, and to challenge myself to produce something that fresh. For me that's a matter of saying 'Does something have to be this complex?' I think my tendency is to be too complicated, and I have to remember to keep it simple."

Simple or not, some of Thompson's best songs these days are still more twisted than anything Fairport or his Fifties heroes would have attempted. On "Mirror Blue," for example, *Shane & Dixie* tells of a Sid and Nancy-type couple bound for death and glory; they make it only as far as death. The song gets its edge from its improbably jolly rockabilly arrangement and the nasty glee with which Thompson tells the sordid tale. "The point is that they both live by that phrase, 'Fame and love will never die.' And they both do, they both peter out. So they were wrong and it wasn't worth it."

If that sounds like a bleak vision, Thompson also has a way of cracking a wide smile when you least expect it. For instance, the new album's *MGB-GT*, which appears at first to be a fun song about a fast car, actually is a fun song about a fast car, set to a sprightly folk-dance tune.

"I wanted to extract revenge on America with that one," he explained. "As a kid I was so frustrated by listening to Chuck Berry and Jan and Dean records, and not knowing what they were talking about. All those jargon songs about cars and surfing—we were over here in England scratching our heads, trying to play a line fifteen times to figure out what the words were, and it would always be some kind of carburetor. And of course the Beach Boys had a whiny way of singing that made it especially unin-

ESSENTIAL RICHARD THOMPSON

LIEGE AND LIEF (1969)

A&M 4257

With Fairport Convention, featuring *Matty Groves*, the sixteenth century's finest rave-up.

I WANT TO SEE THE BRIGHT LIGHTS TONIGHT (1974)

HANNIBAL/RYKO 4407

With ex-wife Linda, and the English folk-rock movement's finest moment.

GUITAR, VOCAL (1976)

HANNIBAL/RYKO 4413

Unreleased and alternate takes, including the achingly gorgeous *A Heart Needs a Home*.

SHOOT OUT THE LIGHTS (1982)

HANNIBAL/RYKO 1303

Adulterous guilt, unbelievable guitar (the title track). Pick hit: *Wall of Death*.

LIVE, LOVE, LARF & LOAF (1987)

RHINO 70831

Fascinating collaboration with Captain Beefheart drummer John French and guitar wizards Fred Frith and Henry Kaiser.

WATCHING THE DARK (1993)

HANNIBAL/RYKO 5303

Three-CD career retrospective. High point: the bone-chilling guitar epic *Calvary Cross*.

telligible—not fair, is it? I think jargon songs are the way of the future. No more plot songs from now on, no more boy meets girl. Just long lists of spare parts."

But seriously, Thompson really does have a surprise in store for his next album. When internal shakeups at Capitol kept "Mirror Blue" on the shelf for six months after its originally planned summer release date, he used the time to write most of the follow-up. "It's a pop record in the old-fashioned sense. Sixties-style, with 2½-minute songs. But you never know, of course. It might come out sounding just the same as any other record of mine."

It's typical of Thompson to check his ego at every turn. He remains the most humble of cult figures, withdrawing one of his albums, the perfectly fine live disc "Small Town Romance," because he couldn't accept his performances. And he brushes aside any suggestion that he's a world-class guitarist. "I think I'm just

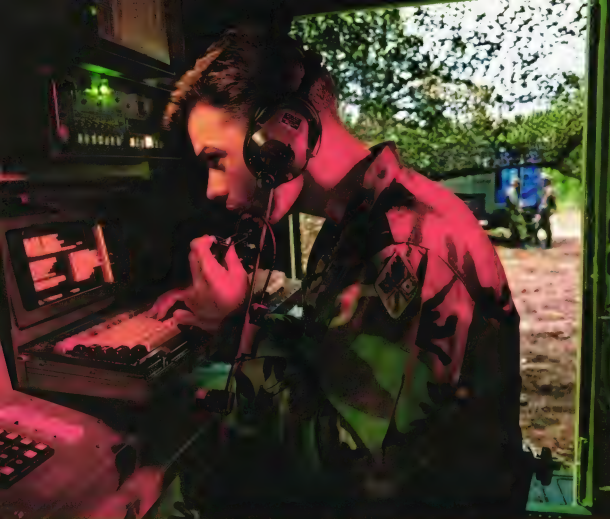
a guitar player who works within the song format. Whatever I'm doing, I try to relate to a song. I may not be a great instrumentalist, but I do try to be a stylist."

Similarly, Thompson kept a low profile when he recently received two high veteran-rockers honors: a boxed set and a couple of tribute albums. His only involvement with the boxed set ("Watching the Dark," on Ryko) was to veto a few songs that he found embarrassing. "A few tracks made me uncomfortable," he said. "It could have been the performance or the recording quality, but there were a few I couldn't live with. I think there's good stuff and bad stuff I've done. It's interesting to go back occasionally, but only as a reference, to see if I'm moving backward or not."

As for the tribute albums ("The World Is a Wonderful Place," featuring mostly folk-circuit performers on Green Linnet, and the forthcoming "Beat the Retreat," featuring R.E.M. and other rock heavyweights on Capitol), he hasn't heard them and doesn't want to. "I honestly tried not to get involved. It's flattering, but it's sort of embarrassing to me, and it's distracting—I'd rather just concentrate on what I'm doing. I think I have an adequate ego. It's big enough. I wouldn't want to make it any bigger."

"If I tried to make the records really commercial, I'd probably fall on my face," he said. "I'm sorry I can't be part of what's on the radio, but I'm sorry that everyone else can't be part of it either. I'm sorry there isn't a place for Randy Newman, or even some band like Crowded House, who I admire greatly and who seem to be a real pop band in the classic sense. But I'm not out to conquer the world. It's always nice when people like your music, but that doesn't mean everybody has to."

Reminded of Neil Young's famous "better to burn out than to fade away" dictum, Thompson's view is that it's even better not to do either. "I don't think that rock-and-roll is something where you have to die at twenty-five anymore," he said. "If you're a film director or a novelist you should just about be hitting it by the time you're forty. I think rock has become capable of affecting adult emotions and concepts; it isn't just a young person's music anymore. I don't see why I should burn out or anything. It just doesn't seem necessary." □



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THE FORGOTTEN COMPONENT?

**If you're looking for
power and control in
one package, take
another look at the
integrated amp.**



BY DANIEL KUMIN

These days, the integrated amplifier is rather the forgotten player on the U.S. hi-fi field. In much of the rest of the world, however, the integrated amp—which you might think of either as a receiver without the tuner or as a preamp and a power amp combined in a single chassis—is the system building block of choice. How did this difference come about?

Americans enthusiastically embraced the stereo receiver in the 1960's and 1970's, perhaps because receivers initially offered better value (or at least more features) per dollar than separates, perhaps because we love products that combine several functions (consider the pedometer-watch-radio). Disdained by separate-components purists and the mass market alike, the integrated amp nearly disappeared from our stores, kept alive mainly by serious audiophiles with limited space and budgets.

Maybe we've been missing something. Even in today's age of digital audio and home theater, there's a place for a component that *doesn't* do everything. In fact, each argument in favor of a receiver can be turned on its head to support the value of the integrated amp.

No tuner section. Sure, receivers have built-in AM/FM reception—so you get more for your money. On the other hand, integrated amps are ideal for music lovers who live in hopeless-reception areas or who have no interest in radio. Why pay for circuitry you cannot or will not use? Integrated

The Acoustic BIA-100 "direct input amplifier" (\$495) employs passive components and a high-sensitivity power section to eliminate the need for preamplification. It's rated to deliver up to 100 watts per channel.



Part of Pioneer's Elite series, the A-51 (\$350) is rated to deliver 100 watts per channel into 8 ohms. It has six inputs, including phono, and features a source-direct switch and a bypassable phono-equalization circuit.



Carver's CMV-1185 (\$350) has a Dolby Pro Logic decoder, seven audio inputs, and three video inputs. Rated power output is 80 watts each for the front left and right speakers, 90 watts for the center, and 35 watts each for two surrounds.



Denon's AVC-3030 (\$1,350) packs a Dolby Pro Logic decoder, a nine-mode ambience processor with adjustable parameters, and a power section rated to deliver 110 watts each to the three front channels and 35 watts apiece to a pair of surround outputs.



Harman Kardon's HK6350R (\$499) is rated to deliver 70 watts per channel into 8 ohms. It has one external-processor loop, two tape loops, loudness-compensation and infrasonic-filter switches, and four inputs, including phono.

amps should also appeal strongly to two additional classes of music listeners: 1) radio fans who want the very best tuner they can find or afford rather than accepting whatever comes in a receiver, and 2) casual listeners who are satisfied with the performance of an inexpensive AM/FM table radio or who don't mind wiring up an old, cast-off receiver and using it as an occasional tuner.

Simplicity. As receivers have evolved into ever more feature-laden forms, their perceived value has increased, but so has their complexity—to the point where long sessions with the owner's manual have become an indispensable part of using today's A/V models. In stark contrast, most of today's integrated amps are beacons of ergonomic sanity. If you want a generous complement of audio inputs and control functions, such as two or more tape loops with bidirectional dubbing and independent source selection for recording and listening—without mind-boggling visual displays and a computer-like user interface—an integrated amp is the way to go. Another plus: Most integrateds still use good old knobs and familiar buttons and switches instead of multifunction arrow keys and alphanumeric keypads.

Expandability and flexibility. Many integrated amps possess a hidden feature that a majority of receivers do not: independent access to their pre-amp and power-amp sections via rear-panel jacks (usually connected by removable "jumpers") or switches. The benefit is that you can upgrade to a higher-power outboard amplifier and still use the on-board power amp to drive a pair of extension speakers or to biamp a subwoofer/satellite system. It also means you could add a surround-sound processor/preamplifier to your system at a later date and use the integrated amp's power section to drive some of your speakers and an outboard amp for the others.

Compact size. Integrated amplifiers tend to take up less space than comparable receivers—especially the A/V variety. "Midi"-size integrated amps, in particular, are worth a serious look because of the surprising levels of power and performance they can offer.

The surround option. Only about a dozen of the integrated amps available in the U.S. are multichannel designs with on-board surround-sound decoding and processing. By comparison, there are more than 150 re-

ceivers to choose from, and a solid two-thirds of them are A/V designs that include surround-sound facilities. So if plain old two-channel stereo (remember that?) is all you want, you'll likely find a more meaningful selection among the integrated ranks. What's more, if you want a relatively high-power amplifier—let's say more than 100 watts per channel—without A/V features, an integrated model may be your *only* option.

And if you want to ease into home theater at your own pace, an integrated amp may be an excellent starting point, because it'll let you *select* a surround processor and additional amplifiers instead of just accepting whatever is built into an A/V receiver.

Audio performance. Most audiophiles would probably agree that at any price level there's an integrated amplifier capable of delivering better performance than a receiver of the same price. There are a number of reasons for this. First, because there is no tuner to worry about, integrated-amp designers can (and often do) pay more attention to power capacity and component quality. Second, the absence of a tuner also means simpler internal electronics. Because there are fewer power-supply circuits, and no RF circuitry at all (nor any video circuitry as in most A/V receivers), the dynamic range is often greater and the ultimate audio signal cleaner. Third, most integrated amps shun the elaborate displays common to receivers these days—another potential noise source.

Variety. With few exceptions, receivers are monotonously similar from brand to brand in terms of features, watts per dollar, and even front-panel layout and styling. The integrated-amp field seems a riot of variety in comparison, with many shapes, sizes, and feature complements—from a 50-watt purist audiophile model for \$1,100-plus to a feature-packed 150-watt workhorse for \$600 to a basic 60-watter for under \$300.

Value. Value means different things to different people. But if you're seeking higher-than-mass-market fidelity at a reasonable price, or elegant simplicity without sacrificing fundamental performance, integrated amps demand a closer look. Sure, you'll probably be able to find a comparably priced receiver that delivers as much power. But you'll be hard pressed to match the add-on/upgrade flexibility of an integrated amplifier. □



Linn's Majik-1 (\$1,095) is rated to deliver 33 watts per channel into 8 ohms. It has six inputs and accepts optional plug-in modules for tuner and multiroom-control facilities.



NAD's no-frills Model 304 (\$379) has a preamp-out/main-amp-in loop to accommodate an outboard amplifier, two sets of gold-plated binding posts, and five inputs, including phono. It's rated to deliver up to 35 watts per channel into 8 ohms.



Onkyo's Integra A-SV610PRO (\$1,100) has a Dolby Pro Logic decoder, an adjustable ambience processor, ten audio inputs, and five video inputs. Power output is 85 watts each to three front channels and 35 watts each to two surrounds.



Besides digital Dolby Pro Logic decoding, Yamaha's DSP-A1000 (\$1,499) has twenty-two surround modes, a center-channel equalizer, and fifteen inputs. Power output is 80 watts each to three front channels and 25 watts each to four effects channels.



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HOME

RECORDING

BUYING

GUIDE

WHILE the familiar old analog cassette is still the star of the home-recording show, the number of digital recorders vying for our attention is growing steadily. Digital Compact Cassette (DCC) and MiniDisc (MD) machines are now available from several manufacturers. And, of course, the DAT format is alive and well among high-end audio enthusiasts, musicians, and professional and semi-pro recordists. The following guide contains summary descriptions of more than one hundred analog and digital decks as well as an extensive rundown of analog and digital blank media (we've omitted open-reel equipment and tape, which are used mainly by professionals). The listings are selective because of limited space, so if a particular model or brand does not appear, that is no reflection on its quality. Specifications, features, and prices were provided by the manufacturers, and all prices are "suggested retail"; actual selling prices vary. Now, reset that counter and hit RECORD.

—Bob Ankosko

HOME
RECORDING
EQUIPMENT**AIWA****XK-S9000 3-Head Cassette Deck**

Dolby S, B, C, HX Pro. Features dual 18-bit D/A converters with 8x oversampling; send/erase head and amorphous record and play heads; 4-motor transport; dual capstans. Digital inputs; mic input. Full-logic controls; auto/manual record-level and bias controls; auto tape-bias selector; repeat; linear tape counter with tape-end signal; L/R fluorescent peak-level meters; remote control. FR 20-15,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N (metal) 68 dB Dolby B, 80 dB Dolby C above 5,000 Hz; W&F 0.018% wrms. 18 1/4 x 6 1/2 x 2 1/2 in; 31 lb.....\$1,200

AMD-100 Portable MD Recorder

Features shock-resistant memory. Fiber-optic digital input and output; mic input. Auto gain control; mic attenuator; SCMS copy-protection system; table-of-contents editing; date and time functions; direct track access; track search; 24-track programming; 4 repeat modes; clock; title display; 24-character LCD with battery-strength indicator. Includes AC adaptor, rechargeable battery, blank disc, interconnect cable, carrying case, and earphones. FR 10-20,000 Hz. 4 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 5 1/2 in; 1.1 lb without battery.....\$850

AD-F810 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features double-gap send/erase head and record and play heads; dual capstans. Direct-in inputs; headphone jack with volume control. IC-logic controls; auto tape-bias selector; auto record mute; repeat; L/R peak-level meters; timer; manual record-level and bias controls. FR 20-13,000 Hz ± 3 dB (high bias); S/N (metal) 65 dB Dolby B, 78 dB Dolby C above 5,000 Hz; W&F 0.035% wrms. 17 x 5 x 1 1/2 in; 11 lb.....\$400

ARCAM**Delta 100 3-Head Cassette Deck**

Dolby S, B, C. Features amorphous record and play heads; cam-driven 3-motor transport; closed-loop dual-capstan drive; toroidal transformer; nonmagnetic alloy chassis; aluminum front panel. Auto tape-bias selector; bias and record level controls; dual-tone calibration oscillator; auto playback NR selection; track programming; music search; auto bias selector; auto space; timer. FR 30-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB (high bias); S/N (high bias) 65 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.09%. Polished-aluminum or white finish. 16 1/2 x 3 x 12 1/2 in; 19 lb.....\$1,250

BANG & OLUFSEN**Beocord 7000 Cassette Deck**

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Integrates with Beosystem 7000. Front-loading drawer; autoreverse; computer-controlled record-level setting; direct track access; auto playback NR selection; track programming; music search; auto bias selector; auto space; timer. FR 30-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB (high bias); S/N (high bias) 65 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.09%. Polished-aluminum or white finish. 16 1/2 x 3 x 12 1/2 in; 19 lb.....\$1,250

Beocord 4500 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, HX Pro. Integrates with Beosystem 4500. Autoreverse; program search; auto tape-bias selector; auto space. FR 30-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N (high bias) 66 dB Dolby B; W&F 0.09%. Polished-aluminum finish with white trim. 16 1/2 x 2 3/4 x 9 1/2 in; 15 lb.....\$900

CARVER**TD-1770 3-Head Cassette Deck**

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features metal alloy record and play heads; MPX filter. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; adjustable bias; auto tape-bias selector; record-balance control; blank skip; record mute; program play and search; repeat; two fluorescent peak-level meters; digital real-time counter; timer; remote control. FR 20-19,000 Hz ± 2 , ± 3 dB; S/N 75 dB; W&F 0.05%, 19 x 5 1/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 15 lb.\$600

TDR-1550 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features oxygen-free record/playback-head core; MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control. Autoreverse; full-logic controls; adjustable bias; auto tape-bias selector; program search; repeat; two fluorescent meters; digital real-time counter; record mute; timer; peak-hold meter; remote control. FR 20-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 75 dB; W&F 0.05%, 19 x 5 1/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 15 lb.\$500

DENON

Analog cassette decks feature adjustable bias, auto space, a headphone jack, and compatibility with Denon's IS-system remote control.

DTR-80P Portable DAT Recorder

8x oversampling, dual 18-bit A/D hybrid multi-bit D/A converters, dual sigma-delta A/D converters. Features 20-bit digital filter. Fiber-optic/coaxial digital inputs; coaxial digital output; analog mini-jack line-level input and output; headphone jack. ID-code editing; 100x fast wind and search speeds; 3-10x cue/rewind speed; peak-hold meters; backlit LCD. Operates on 4 alkaline batteries for 3 1/2-hr record or 4-hr playback time. Includes AC adaptor. Sampling rates 48,000, 44,100, and 32,000 Hz; FR 20-22,000 Hz ± 0.5 dB; S/N 90 dB; THD 0.008%; dynamic range 90 dB\$900

RC-423. Wired remote control.\$40

DRS-810 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features horizontal-loading tape drawer; Super Permalloy combination head in die-cast aluminum base; dual-capstan 3-motor transport; ceramic-composite stabilizer; dual power supplies. Tape-bias selector; auto tape-monitor function; program search; record-balance control; peak-hold fluorescent meters; linear time counter with remaining-time display. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 75 dB; W&F 0.038%.\$500

DRM-740 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features Super Permalloy combination head in die-cast aluminum base; dual-capstan 3-motor transport; dual power supplies. Synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; program search; record-balance control; linear real-time counter; peak-hold fluorescent meters. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 76 dB; W&F 0.038%.\$400

DRW-840 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features revolving amorphous-alloy heads; 2-motor transports with non-slip reel drive; dual power supplies. Autoreverse for both transports; high-speed dubbing; auto tape-bias selector; program search; record-balance control; 2-cassette simultaneous record and sequential record/play; synchro record with compatible CD players; peak-reading fluorescent meters. FR 20-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 74 dB; W&F 0.06%.\$400

DRW-660 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Computer-controlled transports; dual power supplies. Autoreverse; high-speed dubbing; 2-cassette sequential play; synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; program search; level meters. FR 20-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 74 dB; W&F 0.07%.\$300

DRR-730 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Computer-controlled 2-motor transport with non-slip reel drive; dual power supplies; revolving record/play head. Autoreverse; synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; program search; level meters. FR 20-19,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 74 dB; W&F 0.06%.\$300

DRS-640 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features horizontal-loading tape drawer; computer-controlled 2-motor transport; ceramic-composite stabilizer; dual power supplies. Synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; program search; record-balance control; peak-hold fluorescent meters; linear time counter with remaining-time display. FR 25-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 74 dB; W&F 0.06%.\$300

DRM-540 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features computer-controlled 2-motor transport with non-slip reel drive; Super Permalloy head; dual power supplies; switchable MPX filter. Synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; program search; record-balance control; adjustable bias; digital tape counter; fluorescent display with peak-level meters. FR 25-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 74 dB; W&F 0.055%.\$250

**JVC TD-W079TN****DUAL****CC-5800RC Cassette Deck**

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features amorphous record/play head; computer-controlled 2-motor drive. Headphone jack. Adjustable bias; auto tape-bias selector; program search; electronic counter with memory; level display with peak hold; record mute; balance control; repeat. W&F 0.05% wrms.\$505

CC-806SRC Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features computer-controlled 2-motor drive. Headphone jack. Adjustable bias; auto tape-bias selector; program search; record mute; timer; 4-digit counter with memory. W&F 0.06% wrms.\$440

FISHER**CR-W983 Double Cassette Deck**

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse for both transports; high-speed dubbing; 2-cassette sequential play; auto bias selector; timer. FR 50-16,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 62 dB; W&F 0.06%.\$280

C, W&F 0.12% wrms; THD 1.2%. 16 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 10 1/2 in.; 9 lb.\$200

CR-W683 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B. Headphone jack. Autoreverse for one transport; normal/high-speed dubbing; 2-cassette sequential play; L/R record-level controls; auto tape-bias selector; dual S-LED level meters. FR 50-14,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 62 dB; W&F 0.18% wrms; THD 1.5%. 16 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 10 1/2 in.; 9 lb.\$150

HARMAN KARDON

The following feature jacks for Harman Kardon's system remote control.

DC5300 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Features hard-Permalloy heads; separate motors for capstans and reels; discrete play circuitry. Autoreverse; adjustable bias; normal/high-speed dubbing; linear time counter. FR 20-18,000 Hz high bias; S/N (high bias) 57 dB; S/N 65 dB; W&F 0.06% wrms.\$549

TD4400 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 2 isotropic heads; separate motors for capstan and reels; discrete record/play circuitry; switchable MPX filter. Auto tape-bias selector; program search; intro scan; adjustable bias; linear time counter; dual LED peak meters. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N (high bias) 57 dB; S/N 65 dB; W&F 0.05% wrms. 17 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 13 1/2 in.; 12 lb.\$449

TD4200. As above, without Dolby HX Pro, program search, or intro scan. Features 2 hard-Permalloy heads.\$329

JVC**XD-7507TN DAT Recorder**

1-bit PEM D/A converter, 1-bit A/D converter. Features 4th-order noise shaping. Long and standard play modes; SCMS copy-protection system. Analog, fiber-optic, and coaxial inputs and outputs; headphone jack. Auto ID edit; 2 repeat modes; remote control. FR 2-22,000 Hz ± 0.5 dB standard play, 2-14,500 Hz ± 0.5 dB long play; S/N 91 dB standard play, 17 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 13 1/2 in.; 16 lb.\$1,000

TD-V661TN 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features closed-loop dual-capstan design with direct-drive motor; powered cassette lid; switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control; CD-direct input. Full-logic controls; adjustable bias; peak search; fluorescent peak-display/level meters; auto record mute; timer record/play; auto record-level adjustment with compatible CD player; auto tape-bias selector; balance control; Compu Link system compatibility.\$420

TD-R441TN Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features powered cassette lid; auto record-level adjustment with compatible CD player. CD-direct input; headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse; adjustable bias; auto record mute; timer record/play; auto tape-bias selector; balance control; fluorescent peak-display/level meters; Compu Link system compatibility.\$280

Double Cassette Decks**TD-W805TN Double Cassette Deck**

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features powered cassette lids. Headphone jack. Autoreverse record/play

for both transports; computer-controlled full-logic controls; high-speed dubbing; adjustable bias for one transport; peak-display/level meters; auto/synchro record mode; timer record/play; auto tape-bias selector; auto record-level adjustment with compatible CD player; Compu Link system compatibility.....\$370

TD-W709TN Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features headphone jack; autoreverse record/play for both transports; full-logic controls; auto record-level adjust with compatible CD player; high-speed dubbing; switchable fluorescent peak-display/level meters; auto/synchro record mode; auto tape-bias selector; balance and pitch controls; Compu Link system compatibility.....\$350

TD-W309TN Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse record/play for one transport, other transport play-only; auto tape-bias selector; pitch control; auto record-level adjust with compatible CD player; high-speed dubbing; auto/synchro record mode; switchable fluorescent peak-display/level meters; Compu Link system compatibility.....\$280

KENWOOD

KX-5550 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 3-motor mechanism; tape-path stabilizer; MPX filter. Full-logic controls; autoreverse; auto bias adjustment; bias preset memory; synchro record with compatible cassette decks; A/B repeat; timer; program search; L/R record-level/balance controls; fluorescent level meters; system remote-control compatibility.....\$299

Double Cassette Decks

The following feature synchro normal/high-speed recording with compatible CD players.

KX-W8050 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Features switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack. Autoreverse record/play for both transports; 2-cassette simultaneous/sequential record; 2-cassette sequential play; auto bias adjustment for both transports; index scan for one transport; program search; blank skip; repeat; high-speed dubbing; auto tape-bias selector; fluorescent rec-level meters; system remote-control compatibility. FR 20-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 65 dB Dolby B, 72 dB Dolby C, 57 dB NR; W&F 0.06% wrms. 11 lb.....\$299

KX-W6050. As above with Dolby HX Pro for one transport, one tape counter, auto MPX-filter switching. No auto bias adjustment, simultaneous record, or blank skip. FR 25-16,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 68 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C, 52 dB NR; W&F 0.09% wrms.....\$259

KX-W4050 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C for one transport. Features switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack. One transport autoreverse record/play, other autoreverse play-only; 2-cassette sequential play; index scan for one transport; high-speed dubbing; auto tape-bias selector; system remote-control compatibility. FR 25-16,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 66 dB Dolby B, 73 dB Dolby C, 52 dB NR; W&F 0.09% wrms. 10 lb.....\$199

MARANTZ

DR-92 DCC Recorder

Dual 18-bit A/D converters, 1-bit PDM D/A

conversion. Features motor-driven volume control. Variable and fixed line-level outputs; RC-5 system remote-control interface. Analog-cassette playback compatibility with Dolby B and C NR; DCC text-information display including track and time for home recordings; real-time counter with absolute-, track-, and remaining-time displays; 5 switchable record markers; 3 repeat modes; blank skip; program search; synchro record with compatible CD players; remote control. Sampling rates 32,000, 44,100, and 48,000 Hz. Gold finish with die-cast alloy side panels.....\$1,199

SD-725 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Autoreverse record/play for both transports; full-logic controls; switchable MPX filter; 2-cassette simultaneous/sequential record; intro scan, program search, and blank skip for both transports; fluorescent peak-level display with peak hold; remote control. FR 20-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 59 dB high bias, no NR; W&F 0.06% wrms. 17 1/4 x 4 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 21 lb.....\$649

SD-63 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features double-gap ferrite erase head; hard-Permalloy record and erase heads; dynamically balanced alloy flywheel. Microprocessor logic controls; tape edit; synchro record with compatible CD players; adjustable bias; switchable MPX filter; record-level/balance controls; fluorescent display; remote control. FR 20-17,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N (high bias) 58 dBA no NR, 68 dBA Dolby B, 78 dBA Dolby C; W&F 0.05%. 16 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 1 3/4 in; 18 lb.....\$399

SD-525 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features dual-gap ferrite erase head; DC-servo-controlled capstans and reels. RC-5 system remote-control interface. One transport autoreverse record/play, one autoreverse play-only; full-logic controls; synchro record with compatible CD players; intro scan; program search; blank skip; high-speed dubbing; fluorescent peak-level display with peak hold; remote control. FR 20-17,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias, no NR; S/N 60 dBA high bias, no NR; W&F 0.06% wrms. 16 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 12 lb.....\$399

SD-52R Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features dual-gap ferrite erase head; DC servo-controlled tape-drive motor and separate DC motor for fast winds; dynamically balanced flywheel; dual-azimuth head adjustment; switchable MPX filter. RC-5 system remote-control interface. Autoreverse; full-logic controls; synchro record with compatible CD players; peak-level display with peak hold. FR 30-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias, no NR; S/N 59 dBA high bias, no NR; W&F 0.06% wrms. 16 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 11 lb.....\$349

SD-52. As above, without autoreverse. Features adjustable bias. FR 30-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias, no NR.....\$299

NAD

Model 6100 Monitor Series Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter. Dyneq range expansion; Play Trim control to optimize high-frequency characteristics of Dolby-encoded recordings; full-logic controls; car-stereo EQ; adjustable bias; remote control. FR 30-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 67 dB Dolby B, 77 dB Dolby C, 57 dB NR; W&F 0.06%. 17 1/4 x 4 1/4 x 1 3/4 in; 10 lb.....\$499

Model 602 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Full-logic controls; LED record-level meter. FR 35-16,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 66 dB Dolby B, 76 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.06%. 16 1/2 x 5 1/4 in; 10 lb.....\$299



Marantz DD-92

NAKAMICHI

Model 1000 DAT Recorder

Features 4-head design for off-tape monitoring; microprocessor-controlled direct-drive reel motors. Coaxial/fiber-optic digital input/output. Indexing; program search; digital fader; remote control. Includes coaxial and fiber-optic cables. Sampling rates 48,000, 44,100, and 32,000 Hz. 17 1/4 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/4 in.....\$5,900

Model 1000P. Digital signal processor designed for above. Features 8x oversampling, 20-bit calibrated D/A converters; 16-bit auto-calibrated A/D converter with 2x-oversampling digital filter; digital glitch-cancellation circuitry. Muting circuitry; headphone jack with volume control; level meter. 17 1/4 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 39 lb.....\$6,000

Dragon 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Features microprocessor control; auto azimuth-correction system; discrete Crystalloy record and playback heads; direct-drive motors; direct-coupled record and play amps; auto-retracting slot guides; tape-pad lifter; auto tape-slack-reducing mechanism. Headphone jack. Autoreverse; record level and bias controls; 1-tone test oscillator; separate tape-bias and EQ switches; 2-speed cueing and fader; auto record pause; left, right, and master input-level controls; output-level control; record mute; defeatable infrasonic filter; electronic counter with memory; repeat. FR 20-22,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 66 dBA Dolby B, 72 dBA Dolby C; W&F 0.019% wrms. 17 1/4 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 21 lb.....\$2,599

CR-7A 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Features dual capstans; 3 motors; discrete Crystalloy record and playback heads; manual azimuth adjust. Headphone jack. Output-level control; memory stop/play; record mute; auto/manual tape-bias/EQ selection; auto fader; repeat; fluorescent meters; real-time counter; remote control. FR 18-21,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N (metal) 66 dBA Dolby B, 72 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.027% wrms. 17 1/4 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 20 lb.....\$1,899

DR-1 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Features multiregulated power supply; adjustable play-head azimuth; dual capstans; DC-servo capstan motor; auto slack take-up; integrated construction of head and playback amp. Gold-plated inputs and outputs. Bidirectional auto search; adjustable bias; repeat; timer; record mute; output-level control; tape-bias selector with interlocked EQ selection; fluorescent display; 4-digit counter; system remote-control compatibility. FR 20-21,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N (metal) 66 dBA Dolby B, 72 dBA Dolby C; W&F 0.035% wrms; THD 0.9%. 17 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 12 lb.....\$929

DR-2. As above, no adjustable azimuth, output-level control, or gold-plated connectors.....\$749

DR-3 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Features DC-servo capstan motor; regulated power supply; switchable MPX filter; pressure-pad lifter; auto slack take-up. Bidirectional auto search; adjustable bias; repeat; timer; record mute; tape-bias selector with interlocked EQ selection; 4-digit counter; fluorescent display; system remote-control compatibility. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N (metal) 64 dBA Dolby B, 70 dBA Dolby C; W&F 0.06% wrms. 17 x 4 x 12 1/2 in.; 14 lb\$429

**Pioneer CT-43****ONKYO**

The following feature Onkyo RI-system remote-control compatibility.

Integra TA-2800 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 3-motor micro-computer-controlled transport; dual capstans; isolated transformer; linear power supply; switchable MPX filter. Variable outputs. Program search; record calibration; auto tape-bias selector; full/block repeat; timer; fluorescent peak-hold level meters; remote control. FR 20-19,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.035% wrms. 17 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 14 1/2 in.; 14 lb\$650

Integra TA-207 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 3-motor micro-computer-controlled transport; closed-loop dual-capstan drive; isolated transformer; linear switching power supply; discrete power-supply regulators; switchable MPX filter. Synchro record with compatible CD players; repeat; program search; auto tape-bias selector; fluorescent display with peak-level meter; auto spacing; peak hold; remote control. FR 20-19,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.04% wrms. 18 x 5 1/4 x 14 1/2 in.; 15 lb\$530

TA-R401 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter. Full-logic controls; autoreverse; auto tape-bias selector; synchro record with compatible CD players; program search; auto space; timer; single/block repeat; master and balance input controls; 4-digit electronic counter; fluorescent display; peak-level indicator; remote control. FR 20-18,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.07% wrms. 18 x 4 3/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 11 lb\$380

TA-203 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; full/block repeat; auto space; master and balance input-level controls; fluorescent display with peak-level indicator; peak hold. FR 20-18,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.07% wrms. 18 x 4 3/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 11 lb\$320

TA-R301 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse; synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; block repeat; auto space; master and balance input-level con-

trols; peak hold; peak-level fluorescent display. FR 20-18,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.07% wrms. 18 x 4 3/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 11 lb\$290

Double Cassette Decks**Integra TA-RW900 Double Cassette Deck**

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 3 motors per transport; copper-plated chassis; powered loading. Headphone jack with volume control. Autoreverse record/play for both transports; full-logic controls; random play; repeat; 2-cassette simultaneous/sequential record and sequential play; synchro record with compatible CD players; blank skip; programmable music search; high-speed dubbing; switchable auto space; auto bias selector; input level and balance control; LED peak meter; fluorescent display; remote control. FR 20-18,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.065% wrms. 18 x 5 1/4 x 4 1/2 in.; 18 lb\$700

TA-RW505 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse record/play for both transports; 2-cassette simultaneous record and sequential play; synchro record with compatible CD players; switchable auto space; auto tape-bias selector; high-speed dubbing; input level and balance controls; program search; repeat. FR 20-16,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.07% wrms. 18 x 4 3/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 13 lb\$400

TA-RW414 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse record/play for both transports; program search; synchro record with compatible CD players; switchable auto space; auto tape-bias selector; 2-cassette sequential play; high-speed dubbing; input level control; fluorescent peak level indicator. FR 20-16,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.07% wrms. 18 x 4 3/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 13 lb\$350

TA-RW313 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; one transport autoreverse record/play, one autoreverse play-only; synchro record with compatible CD players; switchable auto space; auto tape-bias selector; 2-cassette sequential play; high-speed dubbing; input level control; LED peak level indicator. FR 20-16,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.07% wrms. 18 x 4 3/4 x 12 1/2 in.; 12 lb\$240

OPTIMUS**BY RADIO SHACK****DCT-2000 DCC Recorder**

64x oversampling, dual A/D and D/A converters. Fiber-optic and coaxial digital inputs and outputs; analog inputs; headphone jack with volume control. Analog-cassette playback compatibility with Dolby B and C NR; autoreverse; 20-character programming; program search; 12-character text display; total/selection elapsed and remaining-time displays; remote control. DCC, FR 5-20,000 Hz ± 0.5 dB; THD 0.003%; S/N 105 dBA; ch sep 85 dB. Analog, FR 20-17,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 63 dB Dolby B, 71 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.07% wrms\$700

SCT-52 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features computer-controlled bias, EQ, and record-level optimization; hard-Permalloy record/play heads; ferrite erase head. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse for both transports; 2-cassette sequential play; normal/high-speed dubbing; synchro record with compatible CD players; program search; blank skip; record-level control; record

mute; auto tape-bias selector; fluorescent display with dual peak-level meters. FR 25-16,000 Hz high bias; S/N 57 dB no NR; W&F 0.1% wrms. 16 1/2 x 4 3/4 x 9 1/2 in.\$229

PHILIPS

The following feature Philips's Enhanced System Intelligence but that enables communication among 900 Series components.

DCC900 DCC Recorder

1-bit Bitstream A/D and D/A conversion. Features autoreverse; motor-driven cassette loading. Headphone jack with volume control. Analog-cassette playback compatibility with Dolby B and C NR; 12-character fluorescent text display; synchro record with compatible CD players; record balance and level controls; timer record/play; level meters; remote control\$800

DCC130 Portable DCC Player

Headphone jack. Analog-cassette playback compatibility with Dolby B NR; autoreverse; 12-character fluorescent text display. Includes AC adaptor, headphones with remote control, carrying case, and rechargeable battery. FR 5-20,000 Hz; THD 0.003%; S/N 50 dB; dynamic range 108 dB; ch sep 90 dB. 4 3/4 x 1 1/4 x 4 1/2 in.; 1 lb\$550

FC-950 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control. Full-logic controls; adjustable bias; synchro record with compatible CD players; electronic counter; fluorescent display\$420

FC-930 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse for both transports; synchro record with compatible CD players; electronic counter; fluorescent display\$280

PIONEER

Auto BLE and Super Auto BLE refer to Pioneer's computer-controlled auto bias, level, and EQ optimization circuitry.

Elite CT-43 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features Super Auto BLE; centered tray orientation; 3 motors; dual capstans; digital sensor control; cassette stabilizer; isolated door; MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control. Synchro record with compatible CD players; 15-track program search; powered eject; user-adjustable bias; timer record/play; defeatable fluorescent display with counter; remaining-time indication. FR 15-21,000 Hz; W&F 0.023%. 17 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 14 1/2 in.; 24 lb\$650

CT-WM62R 7-Cassette Changer

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. For 6-cassette changer; 6-cassette record/play changer plus play-only single-cassette transport. Features FLEX proprietary high-frequency restoration circuitry. Autoreverse for all transports; memory for user settings; powered load/eject; MPX filter; individual NR selection for each cassette; 6-cassette sequential record/play, simultaneous rewind, and random play; cassette scan; 15-track skip search; blank skip; auto space; normal/high-speed dubbing; synchro record with compatible CD players; auto tape-bias selector; timer sequential play/record; remaining-time indicator; digital 4-digit tape/time/fluorescent counter; fluorescent peak-hold level meter; SR-system re-

remote-control compatibility; remote control. FR 20-18,000 Hz high bias; S/N 58 dB no NR; W&F 0.09% wrms. 16% x 5% x 14% in. \$490

Elite CT-W53 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features Super Auto BLE; MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control. Record/play for both transports; autoreverse; 2-cassette simultaneous record; synchro record with compatible CD players; 15-track program search; fade out; counter; timer record/play. FR 20-19,000 Hz high bias; W&F 0.07% wrms. 16% x 5% x 14% in. \$460

CT-W802R Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Features Super Auto BLE for both transports; MPX filter. Headphone jack. Autoreverse record/play for both transports; EQ-enhancement preset for portable/car applications; 15-track skip search; auto space; blank skip; 2-cassette sequential record/play and simultaneous recording; synchro record with compatible CD players; normal/high-speed dubbing; auto tape-bias selector; two 4-digit digital tape/time counters; fluorescent peak-hold level meters; SR-system remote-control compatibility. FR 25-19,000 Hz high bias; S/N 57 dB no NR; W&F 0.09% wrms. 16% x 5% x 9% in. \$400

CT-W602R. As above, without Super Auto BLE or EQ-enhancement preset. Features Auto BLE; FLEX proprietary high-frequency restoration circuitry. 16% x 5% x 9% in. \$330

CT-W502R Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. FLEX proprietary high-frequency restoration circuitry; OFC head wire and leads. Headphone jack. One transport autoreverse record/play, one autoreverse play only; MPX filter; 15-track skip search; blank skip; auto space; synchro record with compatible CD players; normal/high-speed dubbing; 2-cassette sequential play; auto tape-bias selector; timer; two 4-digit digital tape/time counters; fluorescent peak-hold level meters; SR-system remote-control compatibility. 16% x 4% x 9% in. \$265

CT-W402R. As above, autoreverse for record/play transport only. No FLEX or headphone jack. Features repeat play. \$245

CT-W302R. As CT-W402R, without fluorescent peak-hold display, synchro CD record, or dual counters. LED peak-level meter; 3-digit mechanical counter. 16% x 4% x 10% in. \$225

ROTEL

RD965BX. Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features manual bias fine-tune; music search; repeat; fluorescent peak-level meters. FR 30-18,000 Hz ± 3 dB (metal). 10% lb. \$400

RD955AX. As above without bias fine-tune feature. \$350

SANSUI

D-X317WR Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features switchable MPX filter. Gold-plated headphones jack; CD-direct input. Full-logic controls; one transport autoreverse record/play, other transport play-only; 16-song program search; auto record mute; auto tape-bias selector; adjustable bias; blank skip; high-speed dubbing; 2-cassette sequential play; auto/manual record-level control; timer; fluorescent peak-level indicator; remote-control compatibility. 17 x 5 x 10% in. \$349

D-X117WR Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features switchable MPX

filter. Autoreverse; program search; auto record mute; peak-level indicator; synchro high-speed dubbing. W&F 0.09% wrms. 17 x 5 x 10% in. 11 lb. \$270

D-790WR Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B. Full-logic controls; autoreverse record/play for one transport; program search; auto tape-bias selector; high-speed dubbing; auto record mute; repeat; timer; LED peak-level meters. 17 x 5% x 9% in. 9 lb. \$215

D-590W. As above, no program search or full-logic controls. \$139

SHARP

MD-M11 Portable MD Recorder

Features analog input, mic input (microphone optional), optical digital input/output (cables optional), headphone jack; multiple editing functions; rechargeable battery (can recharge during use); antishock memory buffer; scrolling display; bass boost; random play; skip/scan. Includes headphones. Sampling rate 44.1 kHz; FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB. 3% x 1% x 4% in. 10.6 oz with battery. \$600



Sony DTC-690

SHERWOOD

DD-6030C Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Headphone jack. Autoreverse record/play for both transports; full-logic control; program search; electronic real-time tape counter; high-speed dubbing; synchro record with compatible CD players; record mute; blank skip; 2-cassette sequential record/play; 2-cassette simultaneous record; auto tape-bias selector; record level and balance controls; Sherwood Digi-Link III system remote-control compatibility. 15 lb. \$325

DD-4030C Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for one transport. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; one transport autoreverse record/play, other autoreverse play-only; 20-track program search; auto tape-bias selector; electronic real-time counter; high-speed dubbing; 2-cassette sequential play; synchro record with compatible CD players; record mute; Sherwood Digi-Link III system remote control compatibility. 15 lb. \$250

DD-3010C Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Headphone jack. One transport autoreverse record/play; full-logic controls; program search; blank skip; 2-cassette sequential play; timer; auto tape-bias selector; Sherwood Digi-Link III system remote-control compatibility. FR 35-16,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 64 dB Dolby B, 73 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.07% \$225

DD-2010C Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Headphone jack. 2-cassette sequential play; high-speed dubbing; auto tape-bias selector; record-level meter. FR 35-15,500 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 63 dB Dolby B, 72 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.08%. 17% x 5 x 9% in. 9 lb. \$140

DD-1010C. As above, without Dolby C. \$120

SONY

MDS-101 MD Recorder

Features gallium-aluminum-arsenic double-heterodiode laser. Line-level inputs and outputs; fiber-optic digital input and output; headphone jack. Auto scan for blank space; ability to create up to 255 cueing points; ability to combine two or more tracks into one; track/disc erase; track reordering; ability to store 1,700 characters of information per disc; random play; repeat; remote control. Includes blank disc and interconnect cable. Sampling rate 44,100 Hz. 9 x 3 x 1 1/2 in. 6 1/2 lb. \$1,000

MDS-501 MD Recorder

Pulse-type A/D converter, hybrid pulse D/A converter. Features 45-bit digital filter. Fiber-optic and analog inputs and outputs. 100-character alphanumeric track and disc titling; date function; track, disc, and title erase modes; edit functions including divide, combine, and move; auto space; record-level control; 25-track programming; random play; 3 repeat modes; track scan; remote control. \$950

DTC-690 DAT Recorder

Pulse-type A/D and D/A converters. Coaxial and fiber-optic digital inputs; analog inputs and outputs; fiber-optic digital output. Features 3-motor direct-drive transport. Headphone jack. Standard and long play modes; subcode start, stop, and skip management; direct track access; absolute/remaining-time displays; remote control. FR 2-22,000 Hz ± 0.5 dB standard play, 2-14,500 Hz ± 0.5 dB long play; S/N 90 dB; dynamic range 90 dB; THD (at 1,000 Hz) 0.005% standard play. 17 x 3 1/4 x 14 in. \$700

TC-K615S 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 2-motor transport; Permalloy heads; powered loading; ceramic stabilizer. Headphone jack with volume control. Record calibration with test-tone generator; program search; record mute; level and balance controls; linear tape counter; fluorescent display. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB; S/N 60 dB no NR, metal; W&F 0.05% wrms. 17 x 4 1/4 x 1 1/2 in. \$400

TC-WR645S Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features Permalloy head; switchable MPX filter; dual 2-motor transports. Autoreverse for both transports; auto record calibration; 2-cassette sequential play; program search; auto play; normal/high-speed dubbing; balance control; record mute; 2 electronic counters; 14-segment fluorescent display; remote-control compatibility. \$330

TC-WR54S Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features Permalloy head; switchable MPX filter; dual 2-motor transports. Autoreverse for both transports; auto record calibration; 2-cassette sequential play; program search; auto play; normal/high-speed dubbing; balance control; record mute; 2 electronic counters; 14-segment fluorescent display; remote-control compatibility. \$250

ES Series

The following feature a switchable MPX filter, program search, record mute, record level and balance controls, and Sony receiver remote-control compatibility.

DTC-2000S DAT Recorder

Features 16-output 90-MHz D/A converter in complementary configuration; 4 heads; 4 direct-drive motors; Super Bit Mapping; 44,100 Hz

recording sampling rate for analog input, 2 fiber-optic inputs; coaxial digital input; mic input. Champagne finish. \$3,000

TC-K909ES 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C, switchable HX Pro. Features 3-motor dual-capstan transport; suphrie direct-drive capstan motor; laser-amorphous heads; powered loading. Gold-plated connectors; headphone jack with volume control. Bias calibration with test tone; adjustable bias; linear counter; fluorescent display. Wood side panels. 18½ x 13½ x 5½ in. \$790

TC-K707ES. As above, without suphrie direct-drive capstan motor, HX Pro switch, or wood side panels. Features suphrie bearing. 18½ x 13½ x 5½ in. \$560

TC-WR901ES Double Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C, HX Pro. Features powered cassette loading; 3-motor transports; laser amorphous heads; aluminum front panel. Autoreverse record/play and auto record calibration for both transports; pitch control; blank skip; two fluorescent counters. Wood side panels. 18½ x 13½ x 5½ in. \$670

TC-RX606ES Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C, HX Pro. Features 3-motor transport; laser amorphous heads; powered cassette loading. Gold-plated connectors; headphone jack with volume control. Autoreverse; record EQ calibration; auto/manual record-bias calibration; program search; linear tape counter; fluorescent display. 17 x 12½ x 4½ in. \$400



Technics W-700R

TEAC

TEAC W-8008S 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C, HX Pro. Features quartz-locked dual-capstan drive; centered cassette well; antistatic cassette stabilizer. Gold-plated line-level inputs and outputs. CD-direct input; headphone jack with volume control. Independent L/R bias and level controls; ±25% bias range; synchro record with compatible CD players; test oscillator; record mute; auto space; auto tape-bias selector; timer; remote control. FR 15-20,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N 70 dB Dolby B, 80 dB Dolby C, 84 dB Dolby S; W&F 0.022%. 18½ x 5½ x 14 in. 24 lb. \$1,300

V-7010 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features copper-plated steel chassis; cobalt-amorphous head with PC-OCC wiring; die-cast zinc-alloy head block; centered cassette well; quartz-locked dual-capstan drive. CD-direct input; gold-plated line-level inputs and outputs; headphone jack with volume control. Powered load/eject; synchro record with compatible CD players; program search; L/R peak meters with peak hold; record mute; auto space; independent L/R bias and level controls; test oscillator; master record-level control; auto tape-bias selector; timer; remote control. FR 15-20,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N

70 dB Dolby B, 80 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.022% wrms. \$1,000

V-5010 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features copper-plated steel chassis; cobalt-amorphous head with PC-OCC wiring; die-cast zinc-alloy head block; centered cassette well; closed-loop dual-capstan drive; antistatic cassette stabilizer. CD-direct input; gold-plated line-level inputs and outputs; headphone jack with volume control. Powered load/eject; synchro record with compatible CD players; program search; L/R peak meters; switchable MPX filter; record mute; auto space; independent L/R bias and level controls; master record-level control; auto tape-bias selector; timer; remote control. FR 15-20,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N 70 dB Dolby B, 80 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.027% wrms. 17½ x 5½ x 14 in. \$790

V-2020S 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C, HX Pro. Features aluminum front panel; centered cassette well. Bias and level calibration system with test-tone oscillator; fluorescent display; remote control. \$650

V-1010 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Permalloy heads with PC-OCC wiring; die-cast zinc-alloy head block; centered cassette well; switchable MPX filter. Line-level inputs and outputs; CD-direct input; headphone jack with volume control. L/R peak meters; electronic control; record mute; auto space; adjustable bias; master and L/R record-level controls; auto tape-bias selector; timer. FR 15-20,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N 70 dB Dolby B, 80 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.045% wrms. 17½ x 5½ x 14 in. 13 lb. \$400

Double Cassette Decks

W-6000R Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Features Permalloy record/play rotating-head autoreverse for both transports. Headphone jack. IC logic controls; auto record-level adjust; 2-cassette sequential play; auto fade; repeat; normal/high-speed dubbing; blank skip for one transport; adjustable bias for one transport; intro scan; L/R peak meters; 2-cassette simultaneous record; synchro record with compatible CD players; record mute; auto space; timer; remote control. FR 25-19,000 Hz ±20 dB high bias; S/N 69 dB Dolby B, 79 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.06% wrms. 17½ x 5 x 12 in. 14 lb. \$750

W-800R Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Features autoreverse record/play for both transports; program search. Two electronic counters; fluorescent display; remote control. \$370

W-700R Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Features Permalloy record/play head; rotating-head autoreverse. Headphone jack. IC logic controls; one transport autoreverse record/play, other autoreverse play-only; 2-cassette sequential play; repeat; record mute; auto space; timer; L/R peak meters; auto tape-bias selector for both transports; adjustable bias for one transport; two electronic counters; fluorescent display; remote control. FR 25-19,000 Hz ±20 dB high bias; S/N 69 dB Dolby B, 79 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.06% wrms. 17½ x 5 x 11 in. \$280

TECHNICS

RS-DC10 DCC Recorder

Features servo-controlled 2-motor transport; op-

tical sensor for end-of-tape and auto DCC/analog-tape detections; centered cassette well. Gold-plated RCA connectors. Analog-cassette playback with Dolby B and C NR; up DCC subcoding; 12-character album title, artist name, and track title display of prerecorded DCCs; timer; autoreverse; level meters with peak hold; track-number, time/counter, and transport-mode displays; remote control. \$999

RS-TR979 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Full-logic controls; autoreverse record/play for both transports; auto tape calibration; 2 linear electronic counters; 2-cassette simultaneous record and sequential record/play; synchro record with compatible CD players; high-speed dubbing; adjustable bias; program search; fluorescent peak-hold meters; remote-control compatibility with select Technics receivers. FR 40-15,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N 66 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.1%. 17 x 5½ x 11 in. 12 lb. \$420

RS-TR777 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Full-logic controls; one transport autoreverse record/play, one play only; auto tape calibration; dual linear electronic counters; 2-cassette sequential play; synchro record with compatible CD players; adjustable bias; program search; fluorescent peak-hold meters; remote-control compatibility with select Technics receivers. FR 40-15,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N 66 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.1%. 17 x 5½ x 11 in. 11 lb. \$320

RS-BX606 3-Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features digital-servo direct-drive transport; Class AA record amp; PC-OCC coils; switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control. Full-logic controls; program search; adjustable bias; auto tape-bias selector; repeat; auto record mute; timer; peak-hold meters. FR 30-18,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N (high bias) 57 dBA no NR, 66 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.05%. 17 x 5 x 11½ in. 10 lb. \$300

RS-TR535 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Autoreverse record/play for both transports; 2-cassette simultaneous record and sequential record/play; synchro record with compatible CD players; high-speed dubbing; adjustable bias; program search; dual fluorescent electronic counters; fluorescent peak-hold meters; remote-control compatibility with select Technics receivers. FR 40-15,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N 66 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.1%. 17 x 5½ x 11 in. 10.6 lb. \$270

RS-BR46S Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 2 DC motors; switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; autoreverse record/play; adjustable bias; record level and balance controls; auto tape-bias selector; auto record mute; timer; peak-hold meters; remote-control compatibility with select Technics receivers. FR 30-18,000 Hz ±3 dB high bias; S/N (high bias) 56 dBA no NR, 66 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.07%. 17 x 5½ x 11½ in. 10 lb. \$220

RS-TR333 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Full-logic controls; one transport autoreverse record/play, other autoreverse play-only; 2-cassette sequential play; high-speed dubbing; program search; synchro record with compatible CD players; record level and balance controls; adjustable bias; auto tape-bias selector; auto record mute; peak-level DCC

ters; remote-control capability with select Technics receivers. FR 40-15,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 66 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.1%. 17 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/2 in; 10 lb.....\$220

VECTOR RESEARCH

VCX-270 Cassette Deck
Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 2-motor design; switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control. Full-logic controls; high-frequency trim and bias controls. FR 30-17,000 Hz; S/N 75 dB Dolby C, 67 dB Dolby B; W&F 0.05% wrms. 16 1/2 x 4 1/4 x 1 1/4 in; 13 lb.....\$280

VCX-255 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Record-balance control; metal-bias compatibility; adjustable bias. FR 30-17,000 Hz ± 3 dB high bias; S/N 67 dB Dolby B, 75 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.05% wrms. 17 x 4 1/2 x 1 1/4 in; 12 lb.....\$180



Yamaha KX-670

YAMAHA

KX-W592 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro for both transports. Features 12-layer amorphous record/play heads; sorbothane-stabilized cassette doors. Headphone jack with volume control. 2-cassette sequential play/record and simultaneous record of

independent sources; autoreverse record/play for both transports; auto tape-bias selector; play trim; high-speed dubbing; cross-Dolby, random-program, and skip dubbing; 15-selection random program play for each transport; intro scan; auto record mute; blank skip; separate controls, meters, and displays for each transport; level meters with peak-hold. 17 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/2 in; 18 lb.....\$729

KX-670-3 Head Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 3 motors; closed-loop dual-capstan design; sorbothane cassette stabilizer; antivibration feet; switchable MPX filter; hard Permalloy record and play heads. Headphone jack with volume control. Auto adjustment of record bias, sens, and EQ; play trim; adjustable bias; L/R peak-level meters with peak hold; optimum-record-level indicator; 4-digit linear time counter with remaining-time display; repeat; bidirectional intro scan; timer capability; program search; auto record mute; auto tape-bias selector; record level and balance controls. 17 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/2 in; 11 lb.....\$499

KX-W362 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 12-layer amorphous head; 2 motors; sorbothane cassette stabilizer. Full-logic controls; autoreverse; one transport record/play, other play-only; program search; repeat play; 2-cassette sequential play; play trim; auto tape-bias selector; record level and balance controls; record-level indicator; high-speed dubbing; auto record mute; peak-level meters. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB metal. 17 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/2 in; 11.6 lb.....\$429

KX-580 Cassette Deck

Dolby S, B, C, HX Pro. Features separate mechanical and signal power supplies; hard-Permalloy heads; 2-motor transport; cassette stabilizer; switchable MPX filter. Auto tape tuning; play trim; bidirectional intro scan; repeat; adjustable bias; program search; auto tape-bias selector; synchro record with compatible CD

players; timer record/play; 15-segment fluorescent level meters with peak hold; 4-digit fluorescent display; Yamaha IS-system remote-control compatibility. Remote control optional. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB metal; S/N 68 dB Dolby B, 76 dB Dolby C; 80 dB Dolby S; W&F 0.05% wrms. 17 1/2 x 5 x 1 1/2 in; 10 lb.....\$399

KX-W470 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Double-gap ferrite erase head; DC-servo capstan; DC reel motors; 12-layer amorphous record/play head; sorbothane cassette stabilizer; switchable MPX filter; antivibration feet. Infrared input jacks; headphone jack with volume control. Microcomputer-controlled full-logic operation; autoreverse; bidirectional intro scan; blank skip; adjustable bias; play trim; optimum record-level indicator; program search; repeat; record mute; auto tape-bias selector; timer; L/R LCD peak-level meters with peak hold; 4-digit LCD counter. FR 20-20,000 Hz metal. 17 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/2 in.....\$379

KX-W262 Double Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C. Features 2-motor transports. Headphone jack. Full-logic controls; one transport autoreverse record/play; one autoreverse play only; high-speed dubbing; record level and balance controls; auto record mute; repeat; 2-cassette sequential play; auto bias selector; peak-level meters. FR 20-20,000 Hz ± 3 dB metal; W&F 0.08%. 17 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 1 1/2 in; 11 lb.....\$299

KX-380 Cassette Deck

Dolby B, C, HX Pro. Features 2 hard-Permalloy heads; switchable MPX filter. Headphone jack with volume control. Auto tape tuning; intro scan; adjustable bias; program search; play trim; auto tape-bias selector; synchro record with compatible CD players; 15-segment peak-level meter; 4-digit fluorescent display; Yamaha IS-system remote-control compatibility. Remote control optional. FR 20-19,000 Hz ± 3 dB metal; S/N 66 dB Dolby B, 74 dB Dolby C; W&F 0.08% wrms. 17 1/2 x 5 x 1 1/4 in; 10 lb.....\$249

BLANK MEDIA

BASF

DCC Maxima Digital Compact Cassettes

Co-developed with Philips.

D-90, 90 min.....\$12.99
D-75, 75 min.....\$10.99

Chrome Maxima II High-Bias Cassettes

Double-coated chromium dioxide.

C100, 100 min.....\$3.99
C90, 90 min.....\$3.49
C60, 60 min.....\$3.25

Chrome Super II High-Bias Cassettes

Double-coated chrome formulation.

C100, 100 min.....\$3.33
C90, 90 min.....\$2.99

Chrome Extra II High-Bias Cassettes

C100, 100 min.....\$2.79
C90, 90 min.....\$2.29
C60, 60 min.....\$1.89

Ferro Extra I Normal-Bias Cassettes

C100, 100 min.....\$1.89
C90, 90 min.....\$1.59
C60, 60 min.....\$1.45

DENON

All of the following except DX1 cassettes feature antiretention shells.

MG-X100 Metal Cassette

High-temperature-resistant shell. 100 min.....\$8.99

Digital Audio Tapes

K-90DS, 90 meters. Data storage.....\$18.99
K-60DS, 60 meters. Data storage.....\$14.99
R-120DT, 120 min.....\$12.99
R-90DT, 90 min.....\$10.99
R-60DT, 60 min.....\$8.99
R-20DM, 20 min. Demo Master.....\$7.99

HDM Metal Cassettes

HDM-100, 100 min.....\$5.99
HDM-90, 90 min.....\$5.50
HDM-74, 74 min.....\$4.99

HD8 High-Bias Cassettes

Features formulation combining pure-metal particles and cobalt-doped ferric oxide.

HD8-100, 100 min.....\$4.99
HD8-90, 90 min.....\$4.75
HD8-74, 74 min.....\$4.25

HD8-60, 60 min.....\$3.75

HD7 High-Bias Cassettes

HD7-100, 100 min.....\$4.25
HD7-90, 90 min.....\$4
HD7-74, 74 min.....\$3.50

HD6 High-Bias Cassettes

HD6-100, 100 min.....\$3.50
HD6-90, 90 min.....\$3.25
HD6-74, 74 min.....\$2.75

S-Port Cassettes

Features thin case with rounded edges.

S-Port Metal.....\$3.49
S-Port High.....\$2.49

DX1 Normal-Bias Cassettes

DX1-90, 90 min.....\$2.25
DX1-60, 60 min.....\$1.75

DIC DIGITAL

Write-Once Recordable CD's

CDR-74.....\$32
CDR-63.....\$30

MQ Master Quality Digital Audio Tapes

D-122-MQ	\$10.68
D-92-MQ	\$9.32
D-62-MQ	\$7.84
D-48-MQ	\$7.16
D-30-MQ	\$6.93
D-15-MQ	\$4.98

HQ High Quality Digital Audio Tapes

D-120-HQ	\$8.13
D-90-HQ	\$7.69
D-60-HQ	\$7.13
D-30-HQ	\$6.25
D-10-HQ	\$4.62

FUJI

Analog cassettes feature a thin shell.

Digital Audio Tapes

120 min.	\$12.95
90 min.	\$11.95
60 min.	\$10.95

Digital Compact Cassettes

90 min.	\$9.99
60 min.	\$8.99

FR Series Metal Cassettes

100 min.	\$6.49
90 min.	\$5.99
60 min.	\$5.49

ZII High-Bias Cassettes

100 min.	\$5.49
90 min.	\$4.99
60 min.	\$4.49

FR-IIx PRO Series High-Bias Cassettes

Double-coated tape in heat-resistant shell.	
100 min.	\$5.49
90 min.	\$4.99
60 min.	\$4.49

FR-IIx Series High-Bias Cassettes

Double-coated tape.	
100 min.	\$4.49
90 min.	\$3.99
60 min.	\$3.49

DR-II Series High-Bias Cassettes

Double-coated tape.	
100 min.	\$3.49
90 min.	\$2.99
60 min.	\$2.49

DR-I Series Normal-Bias Cassettes

90 min.	\$1.99
60 min.	\$1.49

JVC

R-XD Digital Audio Tapes

120 min.	\$14
100 min.	\$12.70
90 min.	\$12
60 min.	\$10

XFIV Metal Cassette

90 min.	\$3.89
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AFII High-Bias Cassettes

90 min.	\$2.49
60 min.	\$2.19

LORAN

ESQ-90 High-Bias Cassette. Features polycarbonate shell. 90 min \$4.99

Pro Digital Audio Tapes

Made to custom lengths.	
Pro-DAT 140, 140 min.	\$13.80
Pro-DAT 120, 120 min.	\$11.50
Pro-DAT 90, 90 min.	\$10.25
Pro-DAT 75, 75 min.	\$9.50
Pro-DAT 60, 60 min.	\$8.75
Pro-DAT 45, 45 min.	\$7.25
Pro-DAT 30, 60 min.	\$6.50
Pro-DAT 20, 20 min.	\$6.00

MAXELL

Digital Audio Tapes

R-120DM, 120 min.	\$14.99
R-90DM, 90 min.	\$12.99
R-60DM, 60 min.	\$10.99
R-46DM, 46 min.	\$8.99

Metal Veriex Metal Cassettes

MV-90, 90 min.	\$14.99
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MX-S Metal Cassettes

MX-S 100, 100 min.	\$5.99
MX-S 90, 90 min.	\$5.29
MX-S 60, 60 min.	\$4.39

UD Cassettes

UDII 90, 90 min. 2 pk.	\$5.99
UDII 60, 60 min. 2 pk.	\$4.99

XLII-S Epitaxial Cassettes

XLII S-100, 100 min.	\$4.99
XLII S-90, 90 min.	\$4.39
XLII S-60, 60 min.	\$3.59

MX Metal Cassettes

MX-110, 100 min.	\$4.49
MX-90, 90 min.	\$3.99
MX-60, 60 min.	\$2.99

XLII Epitaxial Cassettes

XLII-100, 100 min.	\$4.39
XLII-90, 90 min.	\$3.79
XLII-60, 60 min.	\$3.29
XLII-45, 45 min.	\$3.29

XLI Cassettes

XLI-100, 100 min.	\$3.29
XLI-90, 90 min.	\$2.39
XLI-60, 60 min.	\$1.89
XLI-46, 46 min.	\$1.89

UR Cassettes

UR-120, 120 min.	\$2.79
UR-90, 90 min.	\$1.79
UR-60, 60 min.	\$1.49
UR-45, 45 min.	\$1.49

MEMOREX

Digital Compact Cassettes

DRX-90, 90 min.	\$9.99
DRX-60, 60 min.	\$7.99

CDX IV Metal Cassettes

110 min.	\$7.99
90 min.	\$6.99

HBS High-Bias Cassettes

110 min.	\$5.29
90 min.	\$4.39
60 min.	\$3.99

dBS Normal-Bias Cassettes

120 min.	\$1.99
110 min.	\$1.79
90 min.	\$1.59
60 min.	\$1.29

MRX I Normal-Bias Cassettes

Features clear shell; lifetime warranty.	
90 min.	\$1.89
60 min.	\$1.59

RADIO SHACK

Digital Compact Cassette

SD-90, 90 min.	\$9.99
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The following analog cassettes feature head-cleaning leader tapes.

Supertape High-Bias Cassettes

HD-90, 90 min. 5 pk.	\$12.99
HD-90, 90 min. 3 pk.	\$7.99
HD-60, 60 min. 3 pk.	\$6.49
MII-100, 100 min.	\$4.99
MII-90, 90 min.	\$4.79
MII-76, 76 min.	\$4.49
MII-60, 60 min.	\$3.99
HD-100, 100 min.	\$3.69
HD-76, 76 min.	\$2.79

Supertape Metal-Bias Cassettes

MIV-90, 90 min.	\$5.99
MIV-60, 60 min.	\$4.99

Supertape Normal-Bias Cassettes

XR-90, 90 min. 3 pk.	\$5.29
XR-60, 60 min. 3 pk.	\$3.99
LN-120, 120 min. 2 pk.	\$3.49
XR-120, 120 min.	\$2.79

SCOTCH

Digital Audio Tapes

DAT-120, 120 min.	\$12.99
DAT-90, 90 min.	\$11.99
DAT-60, 60 min.	\$9.99
DAT-46, 46 min.	\$8.99

Digital Compact Cassettes

DCC, 90 min.	\$10.99
DCC, 75 min.	\$10.49
DCC, 60 min.	\$9.99

High-Bias Cassettes

XS II-S, 100 min.	\$4.49
XS II-S, 90 min.	\$3.99
XS II-S, 60 min.	\$2.99

Normal-Bias Cassettes

CX, 90 min.	\$2.99
CX, 60 min.	\$2.49
BX, 90 min.	\$1.99
BX, 60 min.	\$1.69

SONY

Super Metal Master Metal Cassettes

Features ceramic-composite tape guides and cassette shell.	
90 min.	\$19.99

Digital Audio Tapes

Features 0.2-micron particles.	
120 min.	\$18
90 min.	\$15.99
60 min.	\$12.49

MiniDiscs

74 min.	\$16.99
60 min.	\$13.99

UX Turbo High-Bias Cassettes

The following cassettes are designed to resist temperatures up to 239°F and feature a full-width window and raised-marker side ID's.



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A. ☐ Home audio B. ☐ Portable stereo
C. ☐ Car stereo D. ☐ Video
3. In the space below, please write in the type (speakers, car CD player, stereo VCR, etc.), the make, the model number and the price paid for each item purchased in the past 30 days.

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90 min.....	\$3.99
60 min.....	\$3.29

UX-Pro High-Bias Cassettes

Features antiresonant tape guides.

90 min.....	\$4.49
60 min.....	\$3.99

Metal-SR Metal Cassettes

Features high-polymer binder system; rounded case corners.

100 min.....	\$3.99
90 min.....	\$3.49
60 min.....	\$2.99

UX High-Bias Cassettes

Features full-width window; rounded case corners.

100 min.....	\$3.69
90 min.....	\$3.19
60 min.....	\$2.49

CDi High-Bias Cassettes

Features transparent lower shell; slim case with rounded corners.

100 min.....	\$3.49
94 min.....	\$2.99
74 min.....	\$2.49
54 min.....	\$1.99

HF Normal-Bias Cassettes

Features transparent shell.

120 min.....	\$2.69
90 min.....	\$1.69
60 min.....	\$1.59

TDK

MA-XG Metal Cassettes

90 min.....	\$18.99
60 min.....	\$16.99

MD-XG MiniDiscs

74 min.....	\$17.49
60 min.....	\$13.99

Digital Audio Tapes

120 min.....	\$14.99
90 min.....	\$12.99
60 min.....	\$10.99
16 min.....	\$8.99

MA-X Metal Cassettes

100 min.....	\$5.99
90 min.....	\$5.29
60 min.....	\$4.39

SA-X High-Bias Cassettes

100 min.....	\$4.99
90 min.....	\$4.49
60 min.....	\$3.99
50 min.....	\$3.99

MA Metal Cassettes

110 min.....	\$4.49
90 min.....	\$3.99
60 min.....	\$2.99

SA High-Bias Cassettes

100 min.....	\$4.39
90 min.....	\$3.79
60 min.....	\$3.29
50 min.....	\$3.29

SD High-Bias Cassettes

100 min.....	\$3.69
90 min.....	\$2.99
60 min.....	\$2.49
50 min.....	\$2.49

DS-X Normal-Bias Cassettes

100 min.....	\$3.69
90 min.....	\$2.99
60 min.....	\$2.49

D Normal-Bias Cassettes

120 min.....	\$2.99
90 min.....	\$1.99
60 min.....	\$1.69
50 min.....	\$1.69
30 min.....	\$1.49

3M BLACK WATCH

The following feature a lifetime warranty.

Digital Compact Cassettes

DCC-2002, 90 min.....	\$15.95
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7707 Digital Audio Tapes

Proprietary pure-metal-particle formulation.	
DT-120, 120 min.....	\$15.95

4040 Metal Cassettes

100 min.....	\$6
74 min.....	\$5

2020 High-Bias Cassettes

100 min.....	\$5
74 min.....	\$4

D I R E C T O R Y O F M A N U F A C T U R E R S

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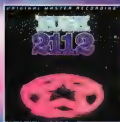
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BEST OF THE MONTH

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Kate Bush Stretches Out



Few artists have so successfully bent musical trends and technology toward them as has Kate Bush. A pioneer in the use of the Fairlight synthesizer, she artfully explored the potential of sampling as far back as 1982's "The Dreaming." Perhaps buoyed by the Utah Saints' prominent sample of a line from an old song of hers (*Cloud-bursting*) in their recent U.K. rave hit *Something Good*, in her new album, "The Red Shoes," she breathlessly dives into dance-club beats, Celtic instrumentation, bluesy guitar-vocal dialogues, grunge

guitar, Bulgarian chorales, sunny world-music tangents, art song, Princely funk, and incantatory trance music.

The album immediately goes for maximum liftoff with *Rubberband Girl*, which captures Bush at her most rhythmically blunt and artfully infectious. Over a solid, rave-worthy drum beat underpinned by synthesizer swashes and marimba, she playfully elongates her vocals in a wish for emotional resilience ("If I could twang like a rubberband / I'd be a rubberband girl"). Vocally, she's got more stretch in her than a slingshot,

reaching for the top of her range with no loss of power on such numbers as the delirious title track and *Top of the City*, a plea to climb above and beyond the filth of city streets.

A handful of special guests contribute to several tracks. Eric Clapton plays with exquisite feeling in *And So Is Love*, and the Trio Bulgarka and Prince join Bush for an ecstatic outpouring in *Why Should I Love You?* Bush herself rises to a crescendo of pure, uncensored feeling when she blurts out, "Just being alive / It can really hurt" in *Moments of Pleasure* and "I don't know if you love me or not" in *Top of the City*. In *Lily* she assumes the voice of an elderly sage, snapping, "Child, take what I say with a pinch of salt / And protect yourself with fire."

Musically inventive, emotionally audacious, and entrancing in an all-too-rare way, "The Red Shoes" will set your feet dancing and your head spinning.

Parke Puterbaugh

KATE BUSH The Red Shoes

Rubberband Girl; *And So Is Love*; *Eat the Music*; *Moments of Pleasure*; *The Song of Solomon*; *Lily*; *The Red Shoes*; *Top of the City*; *Constellation of the Heart*; *Big Stripes*; *Why Should I Love You?*; *You're the One*
COLUMBIA 53737 (55 min)

Stern and Bronfman: Equal Partners in Brahms

Back in 1962, Henryk Szeryng and Arthur Rubinstein's recording of the Brahms Violin Sonatas on a pair of RCA LP's pretty much set the standard for all future recorded versions. Now violinist Isaac Stern and pianist Yefim Bronfman have matched their predecessors point for point musically, and their Sony CD has the benefit of superb sonics. The live

BEST OF THE MONTH REVIEWS

DAN HARTEN/VOL. 10/20



Isaac Stern and Yefim Bronfman

recording is taken from concerts at St. Petersburg's Great Hall of the Bolshoi Philharmonia. There is applause after each of the three sonatas, but it remains warmly polite until the close of the stunning performance of the big Third Sonata, in D Minor, Op. 108.

Brahms designated these sonatas "for piano and violin" by way of pointing out that the pianist was an *equal* partner, not the mere accompanist he had become since Mozart's day (when it was the *violinist* who played more of an accompanying role in sonatas with keyboard). With the intimate, heartfelt lyricism of the first two sonatas, in G Major and A Major, Stern and Bronfman are so hand-in-glove from first to last that they seem to be a single, flawlessly integrated performer. But in the uninhibitedly concertante-style opening measures of the D Minor, Bronfman bursts forth like an uncaged lion. Even so, he never overpowers his partner, thirty-eight years his senior, for Stern gives every bit as good as he gets. The impassioned gravity of the adagio movement and the shadowy aspects of the little presto following it are also wonderfully realized. The CD includes a top-notch encore, Brahms's early and turbulent Scherzo in C Minor, from the "F.A.E." Sonata he composed jointly with Schumann and Albert Dietrich.

Great performances of great chamber

music, beautifully recorded, make this an outstanding release.

David Hall

BRAHMS: Sonatas for Piano and Violin: Scherzo in C Minor

Stern; Bronfman
SONY 53107 (72 min)

Kevin Montgomery's American Music

If ever there was a young singer-songwriter with star potential, it is Kevin Montgomery. Nashville born, but New York and California cured, this twenty-five-year-old writes and sings what he calls "American Music." And while that term might sound like a cop-out, in this case it's true. His songs—extremely well-crafted, thoughtful, and heartfelt—resonate with decades of great American songwriters, from Buddy Holly (in whose band Kevin's father, country producer Bob Montgomery, once played) to Bob Dylan and beyond.

On "Fear Nothing," Montgomery's debut album, the amalgam of sound isn't really country, although Nashville would certainly like to claim it. It's more like acoustic rock dressed up with stinging

electric guitar and delivered with a Southern accent. Montgomery's ardent tenor suggests Dylan by way of John Lennon, but, under the direction of producer Ed Cherney (Bonnie Raitt, Eric Clapton, Bob Seger), he also employs the layered vocals of California country-rock to move his sweet, yet bruised melodies forward into crescendos of emotion.

Montgomery, who co-wrote all the material here, is an intensely passionate observer of human nature. On *Red-Blooded American Boy*, he imagines interrupting a circle of girls on the dance floor to find the one he might hold on to—for the moment, and for the dance of life—but he never follows through for fear they would mock such an unguarded display of emotion. Paranoia figures prominently in these songs, from the Chris Isaak-like *I Want You*, with its atmospheric guitar work, to *I Won't Close My Eyes*, where a pop melody and a strong chorus can't obscure the singer's darkening doubt about a lover on the lam. That fixation continues on *Don't Make Me Hate the Things I Love*, where Montgomery makes the mention of a special dress and the small of his lover's back an erotic, poetic passage, and a testament to a writing ability beyond his years.

Montgomery occasionally steps out of strictly autobiographical mode, detailing the convoluted lives of two women in *Everybody's Girl* and *Josie's Getting Stronger*, one who has no love to give anyone, and another who gives it to the wrong man. Missed opportunities, we

Kevin Montgomery: passion and paranoia



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BEST OF THE MONTH REVIEWS

soon discover, are this young songwriter's stock-in-trade. Yet in his ability to make the personal the universal, his loss becomes our own. "Fear Nothing" seems to be saying we're all in this together—together, but alone. Montgomery knows that the person we always fool best is the one we look at in the mirror every day.

Alanna Nash

KEVIN MONTGOMERY

Fear Nothing

Red-Blooded American Boy; Everybody's Girl; Code of Honor; I Won't Close My Eyes; Which Way Is It Gonna Be; I Want You; Fear Nothing; Josie's Getting Stronger; Softer Years; Don't Make Me Hate the Things I Love
A&M 31454 0141 (50 min)

Inbal Revisits Shostakovich

While most of Shostakovich's fifteen symphonies have entered the concert repertoire by now, his Second and Third have found few enthusiasts—understandable, perhaps, since these single-movement works culminate in choral glorifications of, respectively, the October Revolution and May Day. But Eliahu Inbal's stunning new Denon recording of the Third with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra definitely calls for a reappraisal of this work. And the performance, like the one of the Ninth Symphony on the same disc, may also create higher expectations for the remainder of Inbal's Shostakovich cycle than did the previous installments.

Shostakovich composed his Third Symphony in a single month at the end of 1929, just after he reached the age of twenty-three. He had no commission, but was apparently motivated by a wish for official approval. Whatever the truth of that, he created, as Inbal suggests more powerfully than any conductor who has recorded this work before (yes, including Kondrashin and Rozhdvestvensky), music whose substance and conviction are beyond the designs of any public "program" that may have been devised for it. Like the Fourth Symphony, which Shostakovich himself suppressed for a quarter-century, the more concise Third (a little longer than a half-hour in this performance) points ahead clearly to the

intensely and urgently personal music of his later years in which he made himself a chronicler of his times. Fortunately, most Americans do not understand Russian (and the poor English translation of Semyon Kirsanov's text in the notes does not encourage attention to the words), so we can listen to the chorus at the end unfettered by thoughts of May Day, hearing it as an expansion of the orchestral coloring rather than as conveying any specific message.

In recent years we've been told what a dark and menacing work the Ninth Symphony is. Russian musicians who were actually close to the composer, however,



The conductor Eliahu Inbal

assure us that it is as impertinent and nose-thumbing as it has always appeared to be, with bitterness transmuted into satire rather than heroic gestures. In any event, Inbal gives both wit and power their due, and his sense of momentum is altogether exceptional throughout the work. He has the orchestra at the top of its form in both symphonies, and Denon's rich, well-defined sonic frame puts everything in ideal aural perspective. However you may feel about this or any other Shostakovich cycle, neither of the symphonies on this disc has had more persuasive advocacy.

Richard Freed

SHOSTAKOVICH:

Symphony No. 3 ("May Day"):

Symphony No. 9

Choruses; Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Inbal
DENON 75444 (58 min)

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"Absolutely sumptuous" (October, 1973).

• **JIMI HENDRIX: Are You Experienced?** MCA 10893.

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French Keyboard Masterpieces. VAI AUDIO 1043 (two CD's). Recorded between 1963 and 1969, this set includes works by Debussy and Ravel as well as Franck's *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue*, which is "luxuriant in dynamics and coloration" (October 1974).

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PARKIE PUTERbaugh, AND
STEVE SIMELS

THE BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD EXPERIENCE

GEFFEN 24613 (60 min)

Performance: Cool when it doesn't suck
Recording: Sucks when it isn't cool

Are you experienced? Have you ever been experienced? Well, I have, and that's why I know that there's more than one way to rate this audio translation of MTV's most dynamic duo since Dr. Dre and Ed Lover. So, in the interest of, like, total consumer service, here are the ways in which various people will experience "Experience."

Butt-head: Sucks.

Beavis: Cool.

High-school student: Sucks! No, cool! No, sucks! No, cool!...

College student: The steady, rocking petulance of Nirvana and the staccato, metalloid psychological confusion of Megadeth are a perfect match for the desperate identity crises of the two young protagonists, who do not—repeat, *do not*—resemble me at the same dorky age.

Classic-rock fan: Why are those dudes in Aerosmith hanging with all those loser bands?

Cher: Oh, Beavis, you are the studiest young boy I've ever known. Your braces are truly heavy metal.

Me: Forget the CD. *Beavis and Butt-head* is about to start on MTV. Huh-huh. Huh-huh-huh. R.G.



THE BIS-QUITS

OH BOY 012 (48 min)

Performance: Solid
Recording: Homegrown

Somewhere between the Replacements and Tom Petty's Heartbreakers lies the perfect rock band, and in time it might just be the Bis-Quits. These prematurely jaded veterans from various signed and unsigned bands almost packed it in but decided to gig and giggle together instead of grouching alone, and hence the Bis-quits (as in almost



GRUNGE MEETS MERSEYBEAT

At first, the idea of alternative-rock types playing Beatles songs would seem about as likely as Louis Farrakhan singing *Ebony* and *Ivory* at a skinheads convention. And yet on the soundtrack to a new film entitled *Backbeat* (Virgin 39386) that's exactly what's going on. Producer Don Was apparently intuited that this true story of the Fab Four's pre-stardom days (and the love triangle between John Lennon, original Beatles bassist Stu Sutcliffe, and German artist Astrid Kircherr) would be bogus, with actors simply lip-synching pristine *Beatlemania*-style musical recreations. His solution? Enlisting members of Nirvana, Gumball, R.E.M., Sonic Youth, the Afghan Whigs, and Soul Asylum to impersonate the early Beatles at their scruffiest. The result is one of the great garage albums, as close to a 1963 Beatles bootleg in stereo as humanly possible. Special kudos to Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, who plausibly reinvents George Harrison as a proto-noise rocker. S.S.

quit the biz, and pronounced "biscuits") were born. The first rock-band decision to John Prince's Oh Boy label, the Bis-Quits play the music they feel like playing, biz be damned, on their debut album, which is rootsy in its uncluttered guitars-and-drums directness, careful not to be pristine, a tad smitten with its own cleverness but likable nonetheless. They get good guitar sounds—as in the cranked-up instrumental *76 Biscuits*, with its underwater effects and

goofy momentum—and they click with some especially sharp songs here and there, like the musically inventive *Cyberpop* and the lyrically right-on Eighties kiss-off *Powers That Be*. Overall, the Bis-Quits are somewhat unfocused, straddling both alternative and mainstream camps but belonging to neither. There's no question they're onto something, though. P.P.



MICHAEL BOLTON

MICHAEL BOLTON

The One Thing

COLUMBIA 53567 (52 min)

Performance: Strong but sensitive
Recording: Sensitive but strong

Rock critics everywhere love to pick on Michael Bolton because of his excesses, and Lord knows he's got a few. As a former hard-rocker, he knows exactly how to punch his musical buttons with superhuman force—and he almost never fails to do so. "The One Thing" proves that he hasn't lost his touch. So, if you hate Bolton's musical ties, or his overuse of them, you're going to hate his newest album. (Hey—corporate rock is nothing if not consistent.)

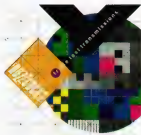
But if you don't reflexively reject every time you hear the Bolton Screech, then "The One Thing" will probably tantalize you with some of its zirconium gems. With *I'm Not Made of Steel*, Bolton takes time out from his meditations on love—both romantic and paternal—to show his vulnerability: "I can bend I can break I can feel / I'm not made of steel." There are musical epiphanies as well. Bolton isn't afraid to stop his parade of catchy-as-catchy-can soft-rock to let his hair down. The Meat Loafian grandiosity of *Ain't Got Nothing If You Ain't Got Love* allows him to rock out—note the sound of a cowbell (synthesized?), an obvious homage to Mountain's *Mississippi Queen*.

The album reaches its apotheosis, however, with *Completely*. This torch ballad composed by Diane Warren, the most suc-

cessful nonsinger/songwriter of the past decade, urges us to believe in the totality of the love under consideration. But the song's chorus, sung with Bolton's finest Ray-Charles-in-heat intensity, could be describing his musical philosophy as well: "Completely not in between / But everything / Completely." This is how Bolton sings, as if sincerity and feeling can redeem the clichés he's singing, reaching the truth buried deep within them.

No wonder critics—professional cynics—don't like Bolton. He's a musical true believer, without doubts even when he sings about doubt. You needn't, and shouldn't, think about his music. You should listen with your heart, not your mind. Go on. Bend. Break. Feel. Michael Bolton isn't made of steel, and neither are you.

R.G.



BUZZCOCKS

Trade Test Transmissions
CAROLINE 1747 (\$5 min)
Performance: N-n-nervous
Recording: Okay

The high-energy Buzzcocks are back, making an exuberantly stressed-out racket on "Trade Test Transmissions." Lines like "Will I be the last to know?" (*Last to Know*), "I'm living in a world of isolation" (*Isolation*), and "Straight, straight through my heart the arrow flies" (*Smile*) describe a solipsistic paranoia made miserable by love's slings and arrows. Yet the music is witty, muscular, and aggressive, suggesting a buoyant spirit. In the end, the music steamrollers over all that's in its path, reducing everything to rubble—even heartbreak.

The Buzzcocks' melodious minimalist monotony is sustained over the course of the album's seventeen cuts—in Pete Shelley's Bowie-esque whine, the guitars' full-bore attack, the aggressive rhythm section. Mixing a pure-pop approach with the jagged discontent of punk, the Buzzcocks hark back not only to their own roots in British punk circa 1977 but also the furiously witty pop-punk energy of the early Who. It is no accident that Shelley sings, "Even though you're not my mum / I've got to get my washing done"—a lyrical allusion to the Who's definitive early single, *Substitute*. Carrying on with delicious, no-frills abandon on *Trade Test Transmissions* and sparking like a generator on fire in *When Love Turns Around* and *Alive Tonight*, this suc-

WHY, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A PACK OF CARDS!!!



Question: What do Smiley Lewis, Ivory Joe Hunter, Big Mama Thornton, King Curtis, and Professor Longhair have in common? Answer: They all recorded seminal Fifties R&B hits, they're all dead, and (along with other artists still with us) they're all featured in the new "Blockbusters of Rhythm & Blues," a boxed set of thirty-six trading cards from comic-book publishers Eclipse Enterprises (\$9.95). Each card features a portrait of an R&B pioneer by illustrator David Chelsea, with pertinent biographical text on the back. Look for the set in comic-book stores (and hipper CD venues) everywhere.

S.S.

cessful Buzzcocks reunion raises only one question: Can the Jam be far behind? P.P.

NATALIE COLE

Take a Look
ELEKTRA 61496 (65 min)
Performance: Jazz-based
Recording: Clean

The unmistakably jazzy nature of Natalie Cole's latest album should come as no surprise. Growing up in dad Nat King Cole's home, where friends like Ella Fitzgerald and Mel Tormé frequently dropped by, she first planned on becoming a jazz singer, only later turning to the popular soul music that marked her debut. The extraordinary success of her 1992 "Unforgettable" album, which featured material identified with her father, opened the door for further jazz exploration. This new set is a logical extension of that experiment.

On "Take a Look" Cole has drawn from songs that range back to Billie Holiday's *Don't Explain* and the Forties movie classic *As Time Goes By*. Other songs are closely associated with other singers, like *Cry Me a River*, which was Julie London's exclusive property during the Fifties. Wisely, Cole tries to find her own interpretation, favoring a cool detachment that some might find too emotionally limited. She is much more exciting—and convincing—when she leaves the ballads and turns to material that gives her a chance to show off her jazz chops, like *Too Close for Comfort* and *Let There Be Love*, where she interpolates snatches of Benny Golson's *Killer Joe*. Other unexpected delights include *It's Sand Man*, which was an aerobic exercise for Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross, and *Calypto Blues*, which Cole's father often sang in concert. All in all, Natalie Cole may be destined to remain a derivative singer rather than a truly original one, but "Take a Look" is appealing nonetheless.

P.G.



GUNS 'N' ROSES

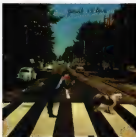
The Spaghetti Incident?
Geffen 24617 (45 min)

Performance: Punk and disorderly
Recording: Good

Give Guns 'n' Roses this much: for a mainstream band, they never take the easy, expected path. Running through a briar patch of punk-rock covers, as they do here, is not the act of a group trying desperately to hang onto its market share. And covering a tune by Charles Manson at the

end of such an album is outright lunacy—punk with its middle finger raised somewhat menacingly. That said, there's more arena rock than punkish rejection of same in the Gunners' new album, despite their sometimes degenerate and trouble-making ways. It's hard, if not impossible, to put across the underclass rage of punk when you're sitting on top of a pile of money, more than a decade removed from the original movement. Also, Matt Sorum drums like a pro, not a punk, and even Axl Rose has some problems with the material. Delivering the U.K. Subs' *Down on the Farm* in a fake British accent only underscores how incompletely he connects with the song; he might as well be repeating lines from a foreign-language tutorial.

Rose does make contact with the Dead Boys' *Ain't It Fun*, whose weary fatalism suits his temper. But the band's take on the New York Dolls' *Human Being* is tedious, and their choice of a Sex Pistols' tune (the post-Johnny-Rotten *Black Leather*) is remarkable only for its obscurity. The real hero of "The Spaghetti Incident?" is bassist Duff McKagan, who's on sufficiently familiar terms with the genre to pull off an affecting tribute to Johnny Thunders (a righteously ragged *You Can't Put Your Arms Around a Memory*) and steer the band through the Damned's proto-punk speedball *New Rose*. That's as good as it gets on this album, which, overall, falls short of its source material. **P.P.**



PAUL MCCARTNEY

Paul Is Live

CAPITOL 7243 8 27704 (77 min)

Performance: Value for money

Recording: Adequate

Here are the Top Ten reasons to buy "Paul Is Live," even though it follows on the heels of a concert album from his previous tour ("Tripping the Live Fantastic") issued in 1990:

10. Sounds better than a bootleg.
9. You don't have to watch Paul and Linda's heavy-handed animal-rights film, which opened the shows, on a CD.
8. Packs twenty-four tracks on a single disc (well, twenty-three, if you discount the 45 seconds of cricket noise entitled *Welcome to Soundcheck*).
7. Linda's nowhere to be heard.
6. Paul performs *Kansas City* in Kansas City.
5. His repertoire holds up better than Ringo's.
4. Early Beatles stuff is wonderful, espe-

TRACK RECORDS

Frank Zappa

By our count, the late Frank Zappa released fifty-eight albums (not including bootlegs and compilations), many of them two- and even three-record sets. Here are the ones I'd say no home should be without. **P.P.**



Absolutely Free (1967)

RYKODISC 10093

Zappa's scruffy Mothers of Invention uncovered the slime beneath the whitewashed exterior of suburban middle-class America. Deadly social satire, scarring music.

We're Only in It for the Money (1968)

RYKODISC 40024

The cover is a wicked "Sgt. Pepper" parody; the album skewers the peace-and-love crowd.

Uncle Meat (1969)

RYKODISC 10064/65

Zappa's most musically satisfying excursion, involving everything from jazzy suites to *Electric Aunt Jemima*.

Tinseltown Rebellion (1981)

RYKODISC 40166

The best of post-Mothers Zappa, full of invention, wit, and vitality.

The Best Band You Never Heard in Your Life (1991)

BARKING PUMPKIN 74233

The title is an accurate review of this tour document of Zappa's last guitar fling.

You Can't Do That Onstage

Anytime, Vol. 5 (1992)

RYKODISC 10089/90

One CD of priceless, unreleased early Mothers, another of concert recordings by Zappa's stellar 1982 band.

cially *Drive My Car, We Can Work It Out, All My Loving, Paperback Writer, and I Wanna Be Your Man*.

3. Includes only four songs from his last album, two of them (*Peace in the Neighborhood, Hope of Deliverance*) actually worth hearing.

2. It's a real live album, complete with bum notes and foibles that make it all the more human.

1. Album cover is a brilliant spoof on the "Abbey Road" jacket and Paul-is-dead rumors, depicting Paul (wearing shoes this time) being dragged across the road by his sheeppdog. **P.P.**

TOM WAITS

The Black Rider

ISLAND 314-518 559 (56 min)

Performance: Harrowing

Recording: Good

Imagine being five years old, going to the carnival for a splendid day of cotton candy and hilarity, and instead getting accidentally locked in the chamber of horrors—all day, by yourself. That's good preparation for "The Black Rider," a theatrical tour through hell, with your guides Tom Waits and William Burroughs. Loosely based on a work of German romantic literature, "Gespensterbuch," published in 1811, "The Black Rider" revolves around a clerk named Wilhelm, who works a deal with the devil to win the hand of a winsome lass only to lose everything in the bargain. As on his recent albums, Waits mines instrumental sounds from what sounds like the pipeline to the Netherworld itself—menacing bass clarinets, sadistic percussion, homicidal cellos, and marimbas on the lam. His vocals sound drawn across broken glass and rusty nails, and filtered through bubbling blood. That combination, married to Burroughs' lyrics ("Wilhelm's cutting off his fingers / So they'll fit into his glove"), makes for a most unsettling visit. And, depending on your perspective, a visit most tedious. Or brilliant. Probably a little of both. **A.N.**

FRANK ZAPPA

The Yellow Shark

BARKING PUMPKIN 71600 (72 min)

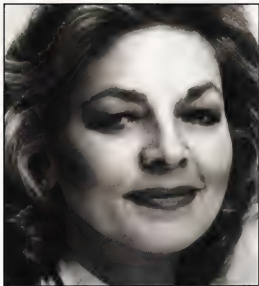
Performance: Weird, wild stuff

Recording: Stellar

"The Yellow Shark" is the sound of musical anarchy in a menagerie. As a 90-minute program of nineteen Zappa compositions, it was performed in three European cities in 1992. Like everything else he did, Zappa's orchestral music defies convention, often dissolving rhythm and harmonic relationships to explore the timbral and textural possibilities of the instruments. His approach is ornery in its fastidious illogic, but within the hermetic self-invented musical language of Zappa's universe, "The Yellow Shark" makes a perverse kind of sense. If you're willing to suspend "normal" expect-

Tom Waits: touring through hell





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Robert Plant—Rock Critic Wannabe?

Former Led Zeppelin frontperson Robert Plant must have an interesting record collection. Asked to remake garage-rock perennial *Louie*, *Louie* for the soundtrack of *Wayne's World 2* (Reprise 45485), Plant chose not to emulate the hit Kingsmen version or the lesser-known Richard Berry original. Instead, he picked up on the fabulously obscure 1964 rendition by the Sonics, a Northwest frat band that presaged heavy metal and punk before anyone dreamed of the terms. Cool move, Bob, and a nice topper to your recent recorded exhumations of worthy Sixties songs by Moby Grape and Tim Hardin. Suggested subjects for future research: Red Crayola, Autosalvage, Lothar and the Hand People. S.S.



tations of music, it is actually rather entertaining.

Scattered through the program are familiar themes from the Zappa canon, radically rearranged for a small orchestra: *Uncle Meat*, *Dog Breath Variations*, *Pound for a Brown on the Bus*. Each section of the orchestra gets to wrestle with a Zappa composition in its turn. A string quintet saws *Ill Revised* into kindling, two pianists gamely tackle the intricate, difficult fingerings of *Ruth Is Sleeping* (originally composed on and for the Synclavier), and the winds blow abstractly through the ruined landscape of *Times Beach II*. Several prominent numbers depict in sound the tragic absurdity of contemporary American life and institutions. Chaos, disorder, and contamination infuse such pieces as *Outrage at Valdez*, *Pentagon Afternoon* (an unsettling evocation of the military mind-set), *Food Gathering Post-Industrial America, 1992* (a snapshot of civilized society's unraveling), and *Welcome to the United States* (wherein an actual Customs questionnaire posed to arriving foreigners is read aloud while the orchestra honkers and rumbles dissonantly). These recurrent jabs at the Motherland are nothing new for Zappa; his scabrous critiques date back to his recorded beginnings and reached a pinnacle of contempt with this early couplet, from *Bow Tie Daddy*: "American way, try and explain / Scab of a nation driven insane."

That was Zappa—bitingly critical, bravely unconventional, determinedly unsentimental, unwilling to suffer fools gladly. His restless intellect animated his music, which bore distinct messages for all who tuned in: Think for yourself, question authority, don't be afraid to break the rules. In Zappa's world there were no musical taboos or artificial barriers that couldn't be broken down. "The Yellow Shark" is a fittingly peevish and bracing summation of his unparalleled musical overview. P.P.

JAZZ REVIEWS

DEE DEE BRIDGWATER

Keeping Tradition
VERVE 607 (57 min)

Performance: Beguiling
Recording: Good

I first heard singer Dee Dee Bridgewater when she was in *The Wiz* on Broadway, and I was not impressed. Her subsequent appearance in the musical *Sophisticated Ladies* didn't do much for me, either. But then came a tenure with the Thad Jones—Mel Lewis Orchestra, and Bridgewater blossomed. Occasionally, she still sounds affected in her delivery, but most of what she does rings true, and she has developed into a fine jazz vocalist. "Keeping Tradition" is a 1992 trio date recorded in France with some European musicians who do their job well. I suspect the liner notes read better in the original French, but for now you won't find a more enjoyable Dee Dee Bridgewater album than this one. C.A.

ORNETTE COLEMAN

Beauty Is a Rare Thing: The Complete
Atlantic Recordings

RHINO/ATLANTIC 71410 (six CD's, 427 min)

Performance: Epochal
Recording: Good

This Rubic's Cube of a reissue—Ornette Coleman's complete output for Atlantic from 1959 to 1961 minus an undisclosed number of never-released masters long ago destroyed by fire—is what practically everybody I know was listening to as last year drew to a close, myself included. The music affording us such pleasure is the same music scorned by many in the waning days of 1959, during Coleman's legendary six-month stand at New York's Five Spot.

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all six of Coleman's Atlantic studio LP's of that time, including the iconic quartet performances with Coleman on alto, Don Cherry on trumpet, Charlie Haden or Scott LaFaro on bass, and Billy Higgins or Ed Blackwell on drums; the spontaneously improvised "Free Jazz" with those six musicians plus Eric Dolphy and Freddie Hubbard; and the earthy "Ornette on Tenor," with Jimmy Garrison on bass. It adds the contents of three albums of odds and ends recorded during the same period but not released until the Seventies (one of these issued only in Japan) and two tracks from Gunther Schuller's "Jazz Abstraction" that represented Coleman's first plunge into the Third Stream. As it was on the original albums, the stereo separation on these six discs is rather severe, but that isn't really a drawback as it allows us to follow the bassists and drummers better as they cleft the beat into different meters.

So much for the facts and figures, though it should be added that the most bracing of the "new" material is *I Heard It on the Radio*, a fast ballad subjecting the 32-bar popular song form in general to the same sort of inquiry to which Charlie Parker subjected *Embraceable You*. At a time when the merest hint of a gospel cadence sufficed to establish a musician as a really soulful dude, Coleman threw in the entire church and the surrounding countryside. Suppressing harmony in the interest of melody and rhythm, he burst on the scene sounding like a rural Texas bluesman in an era when musicians prided themselves as much on their urbanity as on their harmonic sophistication. Assailed as both a primitive and an abstractionist (which would seem to be a contradiction in terms), he caught some of that day's most intrepid experimentalists by surprise, because instead of borrowing compo-



The Ella Fitzgerald "Song Books" set: a monument on sixteen CD's

sitional structures from Europe as they did, he made regenerative use of an older jazz vocabulary of smeared notes and collective improvisation.

This is where I'm expected to express bewilderment that music so vivacious could have stirred such controversy thirty-five years ago. But as jazz enters a phase of boring neo-classical recapitulation, Coleman's Atlantic sound as shockingly fresh today as they must have then. Like most boxed sets, "Beauty Is a Rare Thing" is pricey, but if you claim to like jazz, you can't afford to be without it.

F.D.

ELLA FITZGERALD

The Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books

VERVE 832 (sixteen CD's, 910 min)

Performance: Handled with care

Recording: Excellent transfers

In the mid Fifties, after five years of trying to wrench Ella Fitzgerald from Decca, where she had been contracted since 1936, Norman Granz finally succeeded. Ella had scored a few hits, but Granz was convinced that Decca had grossly underestimated her talent and potential appeal to a wider (spell that w-h-i-t-e-r) audience, and he was itching to prove it.

At Decca, Ella's career had been structureless; she frequently recorded silly novelty songs, and little or no consideration was given to the appropriateness of her accompaniments. Granz changed all that; from the moment she stepped into her first Verve session, Ella Fitzgerald was magically transformed into a major interpreter of songs, a diva who would soon have America's top composers of popular music deeply indebted to her.

It all started with the "Song Books," a series of extraordinary albums on which Fitzgerald—and much of the material she sang—underwent a rebirth. Granz's brilliant concept was to have her devote entire

albums to the great twentieth-century composers and songwriting teams. Between 1956, when she premiered the series with the work of Cole Porter, and 1964, when the series ended with "The Johnny Mercer Song Book," Ella Fitzgerald rose to become a major international star. She made other excellent Verve albums, but the "Song Book" series—which also includes albums devoted to the works of George and Ira Gershwin, Duke Ellington, Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Rodgers and Hart, and Jerome Kern—remains a monument to her artistry, to American popular music, and to Norman Granz. The accompaniment—which, in the main, is by Nelson Riddle, Paul Weston, Duke Ellington, and Buddy Bregman—fits Ella like a pair of fine gloves.

Now Verve has assembled all the albums in a single release, "The Complete Ella Fitzgerald Song Books," which contains everything but the vinyl. Sixteen CD's, snugly inserted into miniatures of the original covers and boxes, have been lovingly packaged with the old, somewhat abbreviated liner notes and a new 120-page illustrated hardcover book containing illuminating essays, detailed discographical information, and an index of the 240 songs. It all adds up to over 15 hours of glorious music that ought to be offered on a layaway plan, because no discriminating pair of ears should be without it.

C.A.

CHARLIE HADEN

Always Say Goodbye

VERVE 501 (70 min)

Performance: More movies

Recording: Very good

Bassist Charlie Haden's latest release, "Always Say Goodbye," continues the delicate weave of old and new that he began in 1991 with "Haunted Heart." The new album is a mix of recordings by his



Ornette Coleman with Don Cherry

current group and music that made an impression on him in the past—not only jazz, but the kinds of earfuls he absorbed listening to the radio and going to the movies as a child. It opens with the fanfare Max Steiner wrote for Warner Brothers in 1937 and goes right into the music from *The Big Sleep*, complete with Bogart dialogue. Then it's a smooth transition to the title tune, another Haden composition, *Nice Eyes*, and Charlie Parker's *Relaxing at Camarillo*. Coleman Hawkins's *My Love* segues into Haden's version, with string arrangement by pianist Alan Broadbent.

When Lester Young told me that Jo Stafford was his favorite singer I didn't quite understand it, but her perfect pitch has since swayed me. Haden is obviously impressed, too, for Ms. Stafford, who sang the title tune on "Haunted Heart," makes an encore appearance here on *Alone Together*. Stephanie Grappelli joins Haden's group for *Where Are You My Love*, which is then heard in the 1949 Grappelli/Django Reinhardt version. Other blasts from the past include Duke Ellington's orchestra playing *Low Key Lightly*, from *Anatomy of a Murder*—with a superlative violin solo by Ray Nance—and Chet Baker singing *Everything Happens to Me*. Yes, this is an odd, defiantly eclectic mix, but it works for me, mainly because I like the parts Haden has added, but also because he has concocted a blend that is as smooth and tasteful as his playing has always been. **C.A.**

NINA SIMONE

Little Girl Blue

BETHLEHEM 30042 (56 min)

Performance: In the beginning...

Recording: Very good

Lunice Waymon was singing in a gay bar in Atlantic city when she made her first album for Bethlehem. It was 1958, when working in such places could ruin a career. Fearing that the parents of some of her Philadelphia music students might see her name in the bar's window, she changed it to Nina Simone. I was a disc jockey on WHAT-FM, Philadelphia's all-jazz station when the record came in, and I can recall how the phones lit up each time we played *I Loves You Porgy*. We told the record company that they had a hit, but they dismissed it as "local rumble." Well, it wasn't local for long, and to hear her magically wed her supple vocals to an absorbing, slightly Brubeckian piano style on this CD reissue of her debut recording is to understand why Nina Simone quickly became a household name.

"Little Girl Blue" is one of those rare albums that keeps on giving with every track. Listen to the way Simone builds up *Love Me or Leave Me*, for instance, or to her incomparable reading of *My Baby Just Cares for Me*. The CD contains three bonus tracks, none of which are merely alternate takes.

Because so much happened to and for Nina Simone after this album first appeared, I wish the reissue producers had updated the original liner notes. The music, however, holds up. Don't leave a record store without it. **C.A.**

QUICK FIXES

CASHMAN & WEST

The AM-FM Blues (Their Very Best)

RAZOR & TIE 79892 20282 (79 min)

Before these guys got rich producing records for Jim Croce they were moderately successful as a sort of poor man's James Taylor times two. But this nicely compiled anthology proves that Cashman & West's early-Seventies wimp-rock was more appealing—and a lot funnier—than one remembers. Case in point: the genuinely clever title song, a lament (no kidding) about Randy Newman's lack of airplay. **S.S.**

DANKO/FJELD/ANDERSEN

RYKO 10270 (46 min)

As the liner notes point out, if Rick Danko, co-lead singer of the Band, folk legend Eric Andersen, and Norway's Jonas Fjeld had gotten together in the Sixties, they would have been called a Supergroup. And, just as likely, their album would have seemed more contemporary. This collection of reworked folk, country, and R&B has its moments, but the singing never attempts to thrill, the instrumentals bore, and soon things bog down into a "wasn't that a time" feel. **A.N.**

GEORGE GERSHWIN

Geeshwin Plays Garshwin—

The Piano Rolls

ELEKTRA/NONESUCH 79287 (61 min)

Engineering wizardry, digital magic, and the technology of the Yamaha Disklavier have converted Gershwin's own piano-roll performances of *An American in Paris* and *Rhapsody in Blue* plus ten songs into totally convincing, authentic "live" performances in up-to-date sound. "S wonderful!" *William Livingston*

ANNE MURRAY

Croonin'

SBK 27062 (61 min)

Inspired by the singers who were her childhood idols—Patti Page, Doris Day, Jo Stafford, Bing Crosby, Perry Como—Anne Murray sings eighteen songs they made famous. Besides love and respect, she brings to the project her well-known agility, vocal beauty, and supreme breath control. A worthy tribute. **W.L.**

ORIS

Live '93

ISLAND 31451 87462 (two CD's, 140 min)

Disco music for drug-addled twenty-somethings? Or the most scintillating live set since the original-cast album of *Mummenschanz*? You make the call. **S.S.**

PSYCHOGRASS

WINDHAM HILL 11132 (63 min)

This highly eclectic album might be considered New Age, but mostly it's sophisticated jazz-bluegrass with classical overtones and Latin, African, Indian, and Pan-Pacific rhythms woven throughout. A sense of humor, too—check out the soulful version of *Whiter Shade of Pale*, with new tongue-in-cheek lyrics. **A.N.**



RE/SEARCH: INCREDIBLY STRANGE MUSIC, VOLUME 1

CAROLINE 1746 (40 min)

Obscure novelty songs from the Golden Age of early stereo, most of which live up to the album's title. Pick hit: Rajput and the Sepoy's sitar and piano version of *Up, Up and Away*. Consumer note: all selections mastered—clicks and pops intact—from original vinyl. **S.S.**

SHONEN KNIFE

Rock Animals

VIRGIN 39063 (49 min)

Remember the twin six-inch princesses who talked and sang in unison in the Japanese monster movie *Mothra*? Well, this is what they would have sounded like as a punk band. **S.S.**

RANDY TRAVIS

Wind in the Wire

WARNER BROS 45319 (29 min)

Now that it's become politically incorrect to refer to country music as "country & western," what trend should be developing but a return to cowboy tunes. Randy Travis is the first major name to jump on the chuckwagon, and while he brands these tunes with his supple baritone, there isn't enough excitement here to stampede a calf. **R.G.**



CHRIS VON SNEIDEREN

Sight & Sound

HEYDAY 032 (46 min)

Superior Brit-Sixties-influenced formalist power-pop, all jangly guitars, soaring choruses, and Marshall Crenshaw-esque lead vocals. A genuine find. **S.S.**



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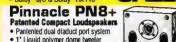
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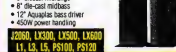


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**BARTOK: The Miraculous Mandarin;
Two Portraits; Divertimento**
Montreal Symphony, Dutoit
LONDON 436 210 (68 min)
**Performance: Good to excellent
Recording: Mellow**

Antal Dorati's 1983 London recording of the complete *Miraculous Mandarin* with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra is gone now, but anyone who has a copy is probably still using it as a favored demonstration disc. Charles Dutoit's new reading is by no means too reserved or refined, but neither the performance nor the recording itself, good as they are—which is very good indeed, with the Montreal Symphony Chorus especially well placed—makes that sort of impact. Among current versions, though, it would be



my choice, and the other two works on the disc are a good deal more persuasive.

Dutoit is very much "inside" the *Two Portraits*, relishing their colors and contrasts,

and the violinist Chantal Juillet is a most sympathetic soloist in the first and longer one, which Bartok salvaged from the earlier work that was restored some years after his death as his Violin Concerto No. 1. The *Divertimento* for String Orchestra (1939), the last orchestral piece that he composed in Europe, is surely the most ingratiating of his major works, with a glorious mix of earthy vigor and suave elegance, playful wit and unfeigned warmth of heart. Dutoit's response to it is unreserved in enthusiasm and unsurpassed in polish; his solo players abundantly deserve their printed credits, and the mellow transparency of the recording suits this work down to the ground. **R.F.**

RENAISSANCE HIGH JINKS

Don't be put off by the terrible pun in the title of the Baltimore Consort's new CD, *La Rocque 'n' Roll*. *Leroque Galliarde* is the name of one of the tunes, and the perpetrators were simply trying to point out that this is a recording of popular song-and-dance from Renaissance France.

The point is well taken. Pop music, even from 1571, should embrace a certain, well, *jole de vivre*. The Baltimore Consort has that in abundance.

Many of the selections here are simple melodies elaborated by the composers and performers. This is music with rustic origins, and the peasant stomp has not yet gone out of it. There are also classic fantasies about unrequited love,

nympms and shepherds, and a tumble or two in the hay. Sometimes pastoral romps, hymn tunes, drunken revels, children's rhymes, and battle songs get a bit mixed up, but that's the way it was back in the days of Rabelais.

None of it is performed with a long face or an overdose of concern about the composers' intentions. These performers intervene at every moment and make it all theirs. I would say that their versions are closer to the real spirit of the music than any academic reconstruction.

There is one potential that is missed. Like real rock-and-roll, much of this music is about sex—usually from a man's point of view. Custer La Rue, the group's wonderful soprano, is heartrending on the subject of a young woman forced to become a nun, but when singing about cuckoldry or sexy shepherdesses in the hay, she is a bit abstract. Fortunately, everything else is perfectly convincing and *charmant*. The others in the group play flutes, lutes, viols, guitars, recorders, crumhorn, bagpipes, even a drum. I don't know if this is the best old-music group in the country, but it certainly is the fun. **E.S.**

THE BALTIMORE CONSORT
La Rocque 'n' Roll
DORIAN 90177 (78 min)



The Baltimore Consort

**BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 9
("Choral")**
Soloists; Chorus; Leipzig Gewandhaus
Orchestra, Masur
PHILIPS 432 995 (66 min)
**Performance: Virile
Recording: Spacious, full-bodied**

**BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 9
("Choral")**
Soloists; Chorus; Royal Concertgebouw
Orchestra, Sawallisch
EMI 54505 (68 min)
**Performance: Well-mannered
Recording: Decent live pick-up**

Kurt Masur's new Beethoven Ninth is a studio recording made during the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra's 250th anniversary season, and Wolfgang Sawallisch's derives from Amsterdam concert performances in December 1992, but recording methodology isn't the only thing that distinguishes them.

Masur's first two movements are full of virility and purposeful energy, with tempos that are based on the new Critical Edition of the score (though well within traditional guidelines). To my ear, the result is eminently satisfactory, and he sustains a richly singing line throughout the slow movement, neither letting the music sag nor hurrying it unduly. The Leipzig Radio Choir and Gewandhaus Children's Choir display impressive body and discipline in the ever-challenging finale. The soloists—soprano Sylvia McNair, contralto Jard van Nes, tenor Uwe Heilmann, and baritone Bernd Weikl—acquit themselves splendidly for the most part (I would have liked a bit more heft in the famous opening solo than Weikl musters) and are well matched in the ensembles. In terms of spaciousness and body, the recording itself is as handsome as one could wish. Overall, this Philips CD ranks among the

A Star-Studded "On the Town"

On the Town, with music by Leonard Bernstein and book and lyrics by Comden and Green, is a wonderful piece of vintage New Yorkiana, and the star-studded new recording led by Michael Tilson Thomas is fully worthy of it. Although often called a landmark, *On the Town* wasn't really a radical departure for Broadway. On the contrary, it was squarely in the tradition of some of the great New York musicals of the Twenties and Thirties with its sophistication, swift satire, revue-like form, jazz flavor, and, ultimately, good heart. But what form, what flavor, what heart!

That form and flavor—and the heart—were heated up and melded in a crucible filled with swing, big-band jazz, blues, and modernism à la Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Weill, but all seasoned in the inimitable Bernstein manner, in that combination of classical and pop/jazz that is so potent in his work. The originality and impact are not in the form but in the way things are put together as well as in the energy and intensity.

The new recording has it all together too. Thomas is a conductor in the Bernstein mold and equally at home in both worlds. He assembled a truly astonishing mixed cast for the London concert performances from which the Deutsche Grammophon CD was taken: Frederica von Stade and Tyne Daly, Thomas Hampson, Kurt Ollman and David Garrison. Those are just the leads. The supporting cast includes some promising

kids by the name of Samuel Ramey in three smaller roles, Cleo Laine and Meriel Dickinson as two night-club singers, Evelyn Lear as the "No sex, girls" singing teacher, and co-author Adolph Green as a Coney Island pitchman. No kidding!

Unlike some opera-singer ventures into Broadwayland, there is nothing operatically false about this crossover casting; in fact, it works brilliantly because most of the casting is quite appropriate. Okay, Ramey is not quite believable as a dock worker, but Von Stade makes a hilarious anthropology professor, and Lear's Madame Dilly is certainly a dilly. This diverse group of star singers and outstanding personalities somehow adds up to an idiomatic ensemble that is perfectly at home with those crafty Bernstein rhythms and vocal lines and that works together seamlessly. In many ways, the star of the show is Hildy—the predatory taxi driver Brunnhilde Esterhazy—and Tyne Daly is the quintessential (if somewhat breathless) Broadway belting babe. The contrast with the vocal variety all around her is in no way disturbing but contributes to some kind of cockeyed unity—Broadway to the nth degree but still recognizable as Broadway, and in one of its finest moments.

This is the show from which not only *New York, New York* comes but also the hilarious *Carried Away* and the exquisite *Lonesome Town*. A special feature of the recording is the restoration of three numbers cut from the original. The vocal numbers are cool, but it is the dance sequences that really steal the show, not only on stage but musically as well. The years have not diminished the freshness of the music (orchestrated mostly by the amazing Hershey Kay, although four other orchestrators also worked with Bernstein), and it is a pleasure to hear it so well performed, recorded, and mixed. London's symphonic musicians (and choral singers) can now apparently handle this stuff as well as Americans, and Thomas gets maximum energy and punch from first-rate performers. The live recording is mostly but not always letter-perfect; in any case, the energy of a real performance more than makes up the difference. **E.S.**

BERNSTEIN: On the Town
Soloists: London Symphony, Thomas
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 437 516
(75 min)

top dozen or so versions of the Ninth currently available.

With respect to the Sawallisch, my gut feeling is that both the performance and recording would have fared better under controlled studio conditions. The performance seems altogether too polite and well-mannered next to Masur's, and I was decidedly put off by the legato treatment of the double-bass recitative at the start of the finale. The soloists—soprano Margaret Price, mezzo-soprano Marijana Lipovsek, tenor Peter Seiffert, and bass Jan-Hendrik Rootering—are individually excellent but not quite as well matched as Masur's quartet. Rootering's bass is more convincing than Weikl's lightish baritone, however, and Price is outstanding in the final ensemble. The recording conveys a sense of the forces involved, particularly as regards lateral imaging, but it is not as well focused as the Philips. **D.H.**

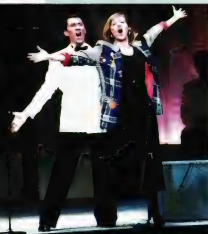
BLACKWOOD: Symphony No. 1
Boston Symphony Orchestra, Munch
Symphony No. 5
Chicago Symphony Orchestra, DePreist

CEDILLE 90000 016 (58 min)
Performance: First-rate
Recording: Good

A student of Messaien, Hindemith, and Boulanger in the early 1950's, Easley Blackwood has been on the University of Chicago music faculty since 1958—prominent as a composer, a researcher into the more subtle aspects of harmony, and a superb interpreter of early twentieth-century piano music. During the thirty-five years separating his First and Fifth Symphonies, he explored avant-garde styles but eventually rejected them in favor of his own brand of mainstream conservatism.

The Symphony No. 1, from 1955, was recorded by the Boston Symphony under Charles Munch thanks to a Serge Koussevitzky International Music Fund Award (the recording was originally released by RCA in 1960). It stands up remarkably well, not only as an example of the American symphonic aesthetic prevailing when it was written but simply as a piece of music. The opening movement, introduced with a dissonant proclamation, is very well put together and highly effective in its contrasts. The slow movement, growing out of a unison melody for winds, is the best of the four, though I also enjoyed the scherzo, whose two-part counterpoint is reminiscent of Mahler and Shostakovich. The broody, rather free-form finale ends in a fadeout, but it's no letdown. The performance is superb, and the sound holds up very nicely.

The three-movement Fifth Symphony is unabashedly neo-Romantic and less highly charged than the First, but effective in its own quiet way. I sense echoes of British pastoral in the opening movement. A long melodic line, with prominent oboe cantilena, lends special appeal to the somber slow movement, which also features subtle textural references to the *Dies Irae* plainchant. The finale is Mendelssohnian, with echoes of the "Italian" Symphony. The performance, recorded in concert at Chicago's Orchestra Hall in 1992, is completely satisfying. **D.H.**



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ELGAR: Violin Concerto

Zukerman; Saint Louis Symphony, Slatkin
RCA 61672 (51 min)

Performance: Romantic
Recording: Excellent

Only a generation or two ago, conductors were bent on making Elgar's music seem more "manly," emphasizing its elements of patriotic bombast and downplaying the emotionality. Today the emphasis is inverted, and Leonard Slatkin vents the music's expressive side so liberally in this performance that it resembles one of Mahler's emotional fever chills—and is all the more moving as a result. His tempos are so fluid and free that the huge orchestra Elgar called for becomes an ocean where the listener could drown, the only stability provided by the conductor's force of personality and intimate understanding of the music.

Given Slatkin's approach, Pinchas Zukerman is an odd choice as soloist. He rarely lets even the most feverish music ruffle his composure or alter his consistently suave, tonally lustrous style, and at times he doesn't seem up to the heroic aspects of this long concerto, such as in the coda of the first movement. But his reading of the affectionate second movement is lovely, and he often seems caught up by Slatkin's passionate conviction. While Nigel Kennedy's EMI recording remains the best modern version of the concerto, admirers of Slatkin's previous Elgar recordings won't want to miss this one. **D.P.S.**



HAYDN: The Seasons

Soloists: Chicago Symphony Chorus
and Orchestra, Soliti
LONDON 436 840 (133 min, two CD's)

Performance: Very good
Recording: Excellent

George Soliti's recordings of Haydn symphonies have sometimes conjured up odd images of Godzilla trying to polka. After all that stormy Mahler and Wagner, how could he be expected to scale his vision down for music as modest and sunny as Haydn's? But over and over in Soliti's recording career, he has confounded his critics when it comes to works involving vocal narrative. The series of picturesque musical vignettes of country life that make up *The Seasons* gives him lots of imagery to respond to, though he avoids the kind of broad, obvious strokes that can make the piece seem overly precious.

The result is a highly competitive recording. The Chicago Symphony Chorus and

Orchestra are self-recommending, even if their performance occasionally overloads the relatively slender orchestration. And if the vocal soloists—Ruth Ziesak, Uwe Heilmann, and René Pape—are not the biggest international names imaginable, they all turn in vivid, charismatic performances and display a wonderful sense of ensemble, both with the chorus and among themselves. Although this is a live recording, the singers achieve a remarkable intimacy, and except for the recitatives, which sound a bit puny, it gives quite a flattering sonic picture of Chicago's Orchestra Hall. **D.P.S.**



MAHLER: Symphony No. 3

Van Nes; choruses; Berlin Philharmonic, Haitink
PHILIPS 432 162 (103 min, two CD's)

Performance: Good to superb
Recording: Very good

"A symphony should be like the world," Mahler once observed to Jean Sibelius. "It should embrace everything." His amazing Symphony No. 3 certainly exemplifies that dictum, and these days it does not lack for fine recordings.

Bernard Haitink's handling of the blaring horn summons at the start and the subsequent orchestral growls and proclamations suggest that this will be a lackluster performance, but once the main body of the movement, with its jaunty march rhythms, is under way the performance goes from strength to strength. The bucolic second movement has a lovely sense of flow, with tempos that are flexible but never mannered—a true song without words. The atmospheric scherzando movement, with its comical-pathetic cuckoo song and haunting posthorn solo, is as entrancing as I've ever heard it, and the orchestral outburst at its end conveys a genuine sense of terror.

The contralto Jard van Nes makes her solo in the fourth movement—the Midnight Song from Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*—an infinitely moving musical and poetic experience. The women of the Ernst-Senff Choir and the Tolz Boys' Choir are beautifully balanced and elegantly imaged in the fifth movement's always delightful "Bimm bamm" chorus.

Haitink and his players are in peak form in the great slow movement that concludes the symphony. The hushed opening can only be described as awesome, and passion remains suppressed until the crucial turning point signaled by the excruciating orchestral outcry, after which redemption is sure. Even if this recording had nothing else to

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offer, it would be worthwhile for the finale alone. D.H.

PUCCINI: *Manon Lescaut*

Soloists: Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra, Levine
LONDON 404 200 (two CD's, 120 min)

Performance: Variable
Recording: Outstanding

The years that have passed since Mirella Freni's 1984 Deutsche Grammophon recording of the role of Manon have not been kind to her voice: Her vibrato has loosened, and her intonation has become less dependable. There is still much to admire in her portrayal, particularly her gripping realization of the final scene, but the illusion of youth is gone. Luciano Pavarotti's Des Grieux, too, is admirable in many ways. His tone is uniquely gleaming, his diction exceptional, as always, and the rueful "Ah Manon, mi tradisci" rings out with persuasive power. In contrast to those virtues we must accept certain explosive tendencies in his legato and instances of less than refined phrasing.

The strong ensemble features the excellent Lescaut of the baritone Dwayne Croft, who makes much of his second-act arietta, and the Geronte of Giuseppe Taddei (born 1916), whose characterful portrayal triumphs over waning vocal resources. The cameo contributions of Cecilia Bartoli (Musier), Ramón Vargas (Edmondo), and other Metropolitan Opera stalwarts are valuable, if rarely scene-stealing.

After a somewhat hectic treatment of the opening scene—a problem for most conductors—James Levine presides over a broadly paced, steady, and generally admirable account. He revels in the contrapuntal richness of the orchestral intermezzo and unleashes a heart-breaking finale. The orchestra is captured at its best. I find his leadership more satisfying than Giuseppe Sinopoli's in the DG set, but Sinopoli's lead singers (prime Freni and Domingo) earn my vote. G.J.

ROSSINI: *Ancient Dances and Aires, Suites I and II; The Birds; Three Botticelli Pictures*

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 437 533
(69 min)

Performance: Grateful
Recording: Tasteful

Respighi was a very schizophrenic composer. He was a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov and addicted to big, colorful, post-Romantic orchestral frescoes. On the other hand, he was also a connoisseur of early music, and his arrangements of it—including *The Birds* and the *Ancient Dances and Aires*—are, however quirky, forerunners of the early-music movement. *Three Botticelli Pictures*, which interprets the Florentine painter's masterpieces *Spring*, *The Adoration of the Magi*, and *The Birth of Venus*, is one of the few works that successfully blend the two sides of his personality: a basic classical chamber orchestra is augmented by bells, celesta, triangle, harp, and piano, and the evocation of antiquity is taste-

fully enhanced by some very modern washes of color. Judging from these performances by the New York-based Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—an orchestra without a conductor—this music, although hardly profound, must be as grateful to play as it is to listen to. E.S.

ROSSINI: *Il Viaggio à Reims*

Soloists: Berlin Philharmonic, Abbado
SONY SKZ 53336 (135 min, two CD's)

Performance: Sparkling
Recording: Very good

The revival of Rossini's pseudo-operatic pageant *Il Viaggio à Reims* (*The Voyage to Reims*) was the sensation of the 1983 Rossini Festival in Pesaro, Italy. Deutsche Grammophon's live recording with a group of stellar Rossinians and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under Claudio Abbado earned fairly unanimous plaudits. Now anchored in Berlin, Abbado assembled a similarly distinguished cast for a series of performances and this recording with the Berlin Radio Chorus and Berlin Philharmonic—and scored again. The orchestral execution is, as before, superb. There are occasional imperfect audio balances but nothing of a damaging kind, though to me Sony's highly touted Super Bit Mapping recording technology offers no noticeable improvement over DG's sonics.

Among the Pesaro veterans, the basses Samuel Ramey (as the dotty English Milord) and Enzo Dara (as the German musical pedant) are as good as ever. Ruggero Raimondi (Don Profondo, the rabid collector of antiques) has lost some of his tonal luster since the earlier recording, but he still delivers his irresistible pater aria with consummate gusto. That comic spirit is shared by Lucia Valentini Terrani (Marchesa) and Giorgio Surian (Don Prudenzi), but neither sings with the tonal steadiness of years past.

Outstanding among the newcomers is the delightful and virtuosic soprano Sylvia McNair (Corinna), whose extended duet with the dulcet-voiced tenor Raul Gimenez is one of the set's many highlights. Cheryl Studer (Madame Cortese) surpasses her DG counterpart in the accuracy of her coloratura, a quality she shares with soprano Luciana Serra (Countess Folleville), though Serra's brilliance is less consistent. Tenor William Matteuzzi displays a thinness sound, but his upper extension is seemingly limitless.

Everyone seems to have entered into the joyous spirit of this exceptional brainchild of Rossini. The production moves smoothly, and the well-deserved applause appears only at the end. Both old and new versions of *Il Viaggio* are recommended; you cannot lose with either. G.J.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Piano Quintet; Four Waltzes; Piano Trio No. 2*

Nash Ensemble
VIRGIN 59312 (70 min)

Performance: Crisp
Recording: Excellent

The increasingly popular coupling of Shostakovich's big-boned Piano Quintet and his more anguished Piano Trio No. 2 is augmented here with four witty, breezy

waltzes for flute, clarinet, and piano. The gracious facades of these pieces drawn from his film scores and ballets never crack, yet the music always seems on the verge of a smirk.

The Nash Ensemble's performances of the quintet and trio compare well with the others available. The recorded sound is far better than in the classic account of the quintet by Sviatoslav Richter and the Borodin Quartet on EMI, and the Nash players have more experience as an ensemble, which enables them to reveal more of the music's glinting, metallic edges and the piquant voicing tricks that Shostakovich sprinkled through it. Their performance of the trio, slightly slower than the equally excellent one by the Beaux Arts Trio on Philips, is well-thought-out, highly personal, and, again, executed with great precision, making this release as enjoyable as it is important. *D.P.S.*



WAGNER: Das Rheingold

Soloists: Bayreuth Festival Orchestra, Barenboim

TELDEC 91185 (149 min, two CD's)

**Performance: Very good
Recording: Effective**

The first recorded installment of the 1991 Bayreuth Festival *Ring* cycle conducted by Daniel Barenboim, this performance was released simultaneously on videotape and laserdisc. Considering that it was recorded at a public performance, the results on CD—even the extraneous stage noises—are extremely effective, providing a real "you are there" experience. Barenboim revealed himself as a formidable Wagner interpreter in his 1991 Berlin *Parsifal* recording (also on Teldec), and he is no less of one in this *Ring*-cycle prologue, which maintains an excellent sense of flow from its beginning in the depths of the Rhine to its end with the entry of the gods into Valhalla.

The characters of Wotan, Loge, and Alberich are the underpinnings of any *Rheingold*, and these roles, as well as the others, are remarkably well cast here. John Tomlinson's Wotan seems less the imposing king of the gods than the Nietzschean "human, all too human" caught in the web of his own broken promises. Günter von Kannon doesn't sound as malevolent as some Alberichs I have heard; as with Tomlinson's Wotan, a human dimension—even pathos—shows through. Graham Clark is quite an extraordinary Loge, going beyond the character's mere trickster aspect to convey something of

the "motiveless malignity" some ascribe to Shakespeare's Iago. And it is good to hear Alberich and Loge *sung* rather than snarled. Helmut Pampuch delineates Mime to fine effect, Linda Finnie gives us a stately and knowing Fricka, and Birgitta Svendén, as Erda, handles her brief but crucial assignment very well indeed.

The Bayreuth Festival Orchestra responds splendidly throughout, and if the recording does not quite match the vividness and refinement of Georg Solti's pioneering 1959 London set, it is highly effective on its own terms. *D.H.*

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Vienna
Vienna Volksoper Orchestra, Schifrin
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With sympathetic accompaniment by the Vienna Volksoper orchestra, ably led by Lalo Schifrin, the soprano Julia Migenes performs fourteen arias from Viennese operettas, singing stylishly and with infectious verve. She is less comfortable with those requiring perfect technique (the "Laughing Aria" and Czardas from *Die Fledermaus*, for example), but the more straightforward excerpts from *Wiener Blut*, *The Merry Widow*, and *The Opera Ball* are very enjoyable, and the rest are sung with seductive warmth. **R.A.**

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Jerry Hadley

The tenor who held Elvis's guitar



By night, Jerry Hadley is more normal than one would ever expect an operatic tenor to be. He drives himself from his home in rural Connecticut, where he lives with his wife Cheryl and two sons, down to the Metropolitan Opera, where he's likely to be heard singing his usual lyric-tenor roles: Lenski in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, Tamino in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, or Nemorino in Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*. He doesn't prepare for performances as if they were high holy days, he told me when we spoke at his home a few months back. "If your art is so fragile it can be easily thrown, it's not art!"

By day, however, Hadley is hardly a dutiful supporter of the operatic status quo. He's more street-smart and worldly than his fresh-faced, I-grew-up-in-Peoria (which he did) looks would suggest. His opinions are precise. His approaches are thoroughly considered. He needs those qualities, because however normal his opera-house life is, his recording life shows him charting a course through options few other opera singers have had to

consider. In a recent flurry of recording activity that included Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* (Telarc) and Gounod's *Faust* (Teldec), he also put together a Frank Sinatra/Jimmy Webb-inspired collection of pop standards with big-orchestra arrangements titled "In the Real World" (released by RCA in February), researched a projected RCA album of arias from forgotten American operas, and recorded (also for RCA) a collection of op-

eretta arias titled "Golden Days" that includes a posthumous duet—Natalie Cole style—with Mario Lanza.

He offers no apologies for his cross-over efforts, even though some critics might think he should—at least for his participation in Paul McCartney's much-maligned *Liverpool Oratorio*. "The critics aren't the ones buying the recordings," Hadley said. "From my point of view, it was one of the greatest creative experiences of my life and something I'll treasure till the day I die," adding that McCartney also let him hold his prize possession, a guitar that once belonged to Elvis Presley.

Recalling "the success I've had with recordings of *Show Boat* and *Candide*," he called these shows "part of my cultural heritage. [Performing them is] what we've grown to expect from operatic tenors. When you go to a conservatory to study classical music . . . you get a little bit of tunnel vision. You become judgmental—as opposed to discerning."

The forthcoming "Golden Days" album is hardly just another glance back at turn-of-the-century kitsch.

BY DAVID PATRICK STEARNS

"We wanted to evoke 'The Age of Innocence,' the ambience of New York City when that kind of music was in vogue," he said. "We tried to recreate the theatrical orchestra of that time—some of the songs are orchestrated as if they're being played at a Central Park band shell. Another is an old-time vaudeville number, *I Love to Go Swimm' with Women*, which I do as a duet with Tony Randall. The Lanza duet was an afterthought. RCA owned the existing tracks of Lanza singing *Golden Days* in a wonderfully personal and intimate way. I had to allow that intimacy to influence the way I did the part on my own."

Hadley has no intention of minimizing his opera career. His interest in future roles ranges from the vocally florid *bel canto* operas of Donizetti to slightly heavier fare such as Britten's *Peter Grimes*. And though the grand egos, incessant traveling, and foreign-language barriers of the opera world make his life more difficult than he ever imagined it would be, Hadley has worked too hard to get to the top to quit.

"When I was at the University of Illinois, I was never the one of whom people said, 'Wow, that's a great voice.' I worked really hard to learn how to sing. I was never a contest winner."

But nonoperatic work was offered to Hadley almost as soon as his career developed, because his voice is unusually focused and lyrical, requiring little technical adjustment for lighter music. In terms of vocal qualities, he's never heard that much difference between what he does in opera and what John Raitt did in *The Pajama Game*. He is, of course, keenly aware of the stylistic difference.

"I don't believe in a one-size-fits-all approach. You can't sing Broadway musicals with the same kind of vocal stance or thrust that you use for Puccini's *La Bohème*. But the work that I've been doing in nonoperatic ventures has improved my singing of opera. It has forced me to recognize that opera singers impose a layer of vocalism on our operatic singing that's somewhat manufactured. We often try to sound like opera singers rather than simply singing."

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THE HIGH END

BY RALPH HODGES

Break-Ins

To augment the Magneplanar loudspeakers recently installed in the Yellow Room ("The High End," January 1994), I have ushered in a 220-watt Parasound HCA-2200II power amp, largely to see how the Maggies fare in different electronic environments. The Parasound, a design of the celebrated John Curl, seemed an apt choice, and a practical one, its cost of about \$4 per watt making it a high-end bargain. Of course, since the Maggies are noteworthy for the amiable, relatively non-reactive load they present, and since the Curl creations are intended to be unflappable in the face of the worst sorts of loads, it may seem that the pairing was chosen to give the overall system an unrepresentatively easy time of it. Not to worry, however. If trouble is sought, getting it from a new, essentially untried audio system seems always to be an effortless affair.

In this instance, the complaint provoked can be described only in subjective terms, and would not be worth describing at all if it had not been so unexpected. Superior or at least equivalent performance to that of the former match-up had been expected from the outset, and it was bewildering when things immediately took a different turn. Principally, the impression was of a spatial jumble—a lack of focus and coherence—that made me imagine the midrange panel had been moved several inches further from the tweeter, and perhaps bugged in phase with it as well. It was not the sort of thing I ever expect to hear from a new amplifier, and for once it sent me straight to the operating manual to see if perhaps some intricacy of setup had been ignored. There I discovered the following: "Like other great power amplifiers, the HCA-2200II requires at least 72 hours of continuous operation after it is first turned on to sound its best." Here was indeed something that had been ignored, but what was it precisely?

Many audiophiles have long believed that new equipment needs a break-in period before a degree of operational stability is achieved, and for devices having mechanical aspects it is easy to view their case sympathetically. Even Magneplanar states that the Yellow Room's new speakers will drop somewhat in resonance frequency with age. But for a modern amplifier, whose stability is—or had better be—imposed and regulated by essentials of proper design, there is far less reason to expect that many trips around the block and an oil change are in order. In fact, I have never seen such a process suggested in any other manual. I called Parasound to learn just how I should best proceed (a simple passive burn-in was fine, the company said), and in time I was able to persuade myself that I was hearing substantial improvements. I was *not*, however, able to persuade myself that I wasn't also just hearing "things"—things of the notoriously susceptible audiophile imagination. So I began inquiring of people who take the objective reality of such things very seriously and who believe they exist for all who pay attention to hear.

John Curl himself seemed as good a source as any. A physicist as well as an engineer, Curl was not actually the author of the Parasound break-in advisory, but he seemed quite comfortable with its existence. "You simply have to take certain things on faith,"

he remarked. "If a thing seems to work out in some particular way, so be it." He then described a problem he had encountered with humidity in fiberglass circuit boards, requiring the moisture to be baked out over time before a design would behave. He also cited the well-rehearsed mysteries of capacitor forming (it is simply not cost-effective for an amplifier company to electrically "form" capacitors to their ultimate performance characteristics during manufacture, so the end consumer is made to do the forming unwittingly in the process of using the equipment), and even the forming of simple electrical connections, presumably subject to expansion and contraction through thermal and other stresses. He emphasized throughout that physics in no way denies the possibility of perceptible sonic alterations occurring during these seemingly minute stabilizations. Others have suggested even more infinitesimal considerations.

Dear reader, do we, the true hard-heads and rationalists in a world riotous with speculation, believe in a cosmos perceptibly regulated by such minutiae? Perhaps, if we're honest, we say we don't know. But one thing is clear: If we're sincere about finding out, it will cost us only some of the household current we'd be expending anyway, and possibly some delight in equipment whose sound we once loved but that has now been "broken in." □

RALPH WARREN HODGES, JR. (1943-1994)

"Break-Ins" is the last piece Ralph Hodges wrote for STEREO REVIEW before he died, of cancer, on January 7. He was fifty years old.

Ralph had been associated with this magazine since 1969, when he was appointed Associate Technical Editor. A few years and many articles and columns later, he became Technical Editor, a position he held until he decided to move to California and a job with Dolby Labs in 1979. In the early Eighties, as a free-lance writer and reviewer, he wrote several articles for STEREO REVIEW, and he became a regular contributor in 1984, when he began writing a new monthly column called "The High End." The column was his for ten years, gathering many faithful readers who appreciated his style and respected him for the way he approached his subject.

Some years ago, an editor here asked Ralph if he could define "audiophile." After a little thought, Ralph replied, "No, I can't define it, but I *am* one." And so he was. His family, friends, and colleagues also remember him as a gentle, generous man who loved music and good sound and did what he could to help others understand and love it too. We will miss him greatly.

—Louise Boundas

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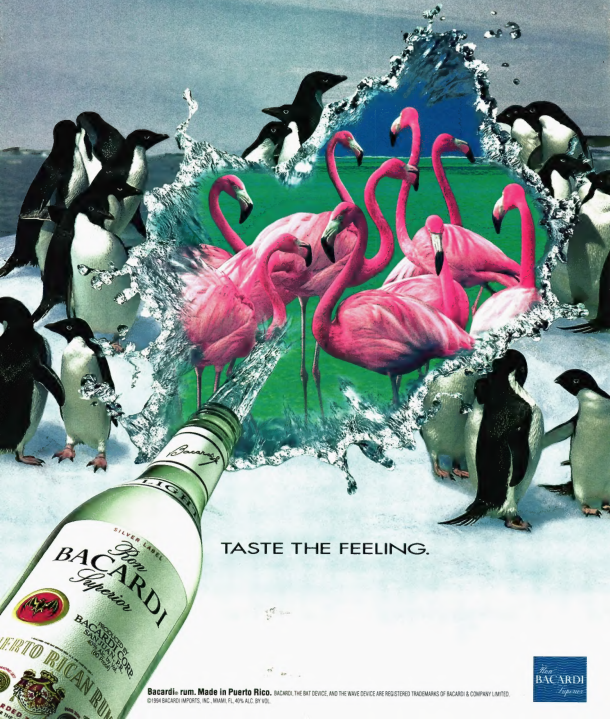
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